

MENU

CANADA'S FOODSERVICE MAGAZINE

SPOTLIGHT ON CANADIAN COOKBOOKS:

- *Recipes from the North - Chef Sheila Flaherty*
- *Taste Canada at 25*
- *2022 Taste Canada Award Winners*
- *Publishing for Restaurants*

IS YOUR TIP-OUT SYSTEM FULLY COMPLIANT?

Examining the risks and how to avoid a sleeping tax liability

The Column

Hassel Aviles of Not 9 to 5

urges the hospitality industry to embrace psychological safety and provide mental health resources for staff this holiday period.

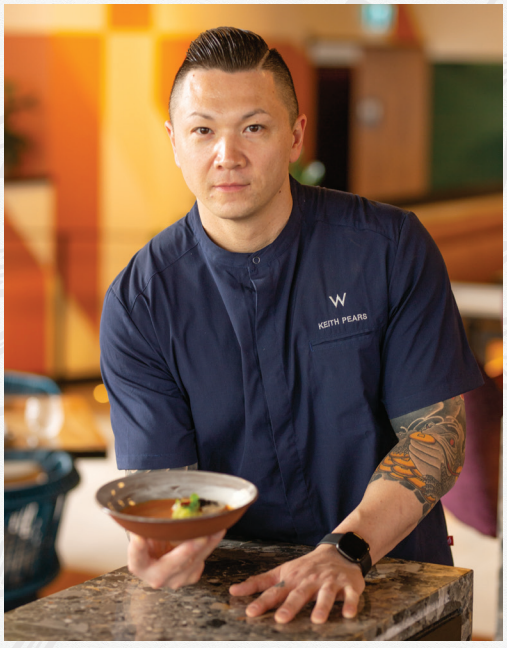
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It's the holiday season. This is a time when we all look back on the year that's soon to pass, with hope for the year to come. This cycle guides everyone's lives yet, for the foodservice sector, this period is once more bittersweet. While 2022 saw the recession of COVID-19 into the shadows of our lives, it remains with us. Restaurants are learning to live with it and operate safely through it. We're also learning new strategies to help us navigate through the labour challenges with new attraction and retention strategies. We're exploring new efficiencies and experiences to support our return to profitability. We're looking at ways to adapt our menus and the service and experiences we deliver to salvage shrinking margins due to high food, labour and operating costs. It may not feel like it, but within the stress lies hope. The unprecedented and protracted strain on operators has forced us to acclimate, innovate and rethink the way we deliver hospitality.

This issue of MENU contains insights and ideas from operators and experts on some of the topics that are driving our industry into the future. Hassel Aviles from Not 9 to 5, a Canadian non-profit devoted to mental health advocacy and resources for the foodservice sector discusses her personal experiences and difficulties faced by hospitality workers during the holidays. We connect with Court Desautels of Neighbourhood Group to learn more about their pace-setting strategies to enhance their employee value proposition while continuing to promote environmental and social sustainability. We celebrate 25 years of Canadian cookbooks with Taste Canada, announcing this year's Taste Canada Award winners and sharing the ways that cookbooks can help promote and deliver new revenue to restaurants. We define and discuss controlled and direct tip-out systems and ways to mitigate sleeping tax liability for restaurants with lawyer James Rhodes and Richard Alexander, VP Atlantic for Restaurants Canada. You'll also hear from Chief Operating Officer Kelly Higginson, for her take on Day on the Hill and the conversations Restaurants Canada is having with government leaders to address the needs of Canadian restaurants.

The end of this year is also an opportunity for us to be kinder to ourselves and to each other. To continue to look out for one another, realizing that this season can be tough on many of us as we pull out the stops to deliver outstanding celebrations and experiences for others. As we finally grab a moment to put our feet up and reflect, we should all take pride in the agility, resilience and strength we've demonstrated and the many things we've all learned about our business and each other that will help propel us forward.





Tianna Goguen
Editor & Director, Communications

Holiday 2022
Volume 7 Number 5

Restaurants Canada

The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires

Do you have comments or a story for us? If so, please email menueditor@restaurantscanada.org.

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MENU

THE PASS

RC Show 2023 - Heart & Hustle
SAVE THE DATE!

Hospitality is about pouring our heart and soul into what we do to nurture and bring communities together. It is this heart that has helped us move forward together, that fuels the hustle to get us through the toughest of times.

Join us at The Restaurants Canada (RC) Show, Canada's leading hospitality and foodservice expo at Enercare Centre from April 10-12, 2023 as we aspire to help the industry work smarter, not harder.

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For more information, visit: rcshow.com

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Credit Card Surcharge Update

Rising credit card "interchange" and other fees have long been a major source of concern to Restaurants Canada members.

Since October 6, 2022, operators have the option of adding a surcharge to a credit card transaction (except in Quebec due to its consumer protection laws), in effect passing on the charge to the customer. This comes as a result of a class action lawsuit settlement with Visa and MasterCard and brings with it potential benefits and drawbacks to operators who may want to implement surcharging.

To learn more about surcharges and get the facts to make an informed decision for your business, visit: www.restaurantscanada.org

TASTE CANADA AWARDS
LES LAURÉATS DES SAVEURS DU CANADA

Taste Canada Awards Winners

A champion of Canadian cookbooks, since 1998, Taste Canada has inspired readers to discover delicious recipes and diverse food stories written from a Canadian perspective. Their annual Taste Canada Awards Gala took place at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto on November 7th with 17 gold and silver award winners in English and French selected from 87 cookbooks entered from across the country.

Read our coverage starting on page 46 of this edition of Menu or visit www.tastecanada.org to learn more.

THE RE-SEASONING COALITION

The Re-Seasoning Coalition Presents: 'The Black Experience in Foodservice' in partnership with Technomic

originally presented October 4, 2022

Businesses equipped to attract, retain, and promote underrepresented equity deserving groups will lead the industry, gaining the highest ROI on their marketing dollars.

Restaurants Canada, Technomic and The Re-Seasoning Coalition (TRSC) take a deep dive on the Black experience in the foodservice industry. This conversation looks at the findings of recent Restaurants Canada and Technomic surveys profiling operator, employee and guest experiences with racism and anti-Black discrimination and how guests expect foodservice organizations across the industry to evolve to become more equitable, diverse, and inclusive spaces for the benefit of their bottom line.

Scan the QR code to watch the FREE webinar or visit restaurantscanada.org.

DAY ON THE HILL: ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

RESTAURANTS CANADA BRINGS ITS MEMBERS' CONCERNS TO PARLIAMENT HILL



Menu magazine in conversation with Kelly Higginson, Restaurants Canada's Chief Operating Officer

Restaurants Canada's government relations team traveled to Ottawa on October 13, 2022 for their Day on the Hill to advocate for changes critical to members and the industry at large. Throughout the day, Restaurants Canada met with key policy makers and officials to discuss challenges facing the industry, bringing along a delegation of operators to share their first-person challenges and experiences.

Coinciding with Day on the Hill was the launch of the national "Restaurants Have A Lot on Their Plate" campaign. Aimed at government policy makers and stakeholders, the campaign is driving awareness of key policy recommendations needed to help revive the foodservice sector. The campaign highlights the three largest challenges facing our industry as we recover from COVID-19: mass labour shortages, debt, inflation and supply shortages. Menu magazine met with Kelly Higginson, Restaurants Canada's Chief Operating Officer to discuss the industry's advocacy priorities and get her read on the success of the event and the road ahead.

MM How was this year's Day on the Hill different from other years?

KH: *Over the last three years the industry has gone through the biggest crisis in its history. If we look back at our history, Restaurants Canada was created just after the war. There were labour issues, supply chain issues, pricing issues, a lot of similarities. But a significant difference was that restaurants, for the most part, stayed open and continued to be gathering places for communities. An industry that depends on labour, having employees come to their place of work – being shut down. That was huge.*

We needed to get back to Ottawa. We hadn't been there for four years. We hadn't connected with a lot of the new MPs and needed to talk about how our $90-billion industry, that is the fourth largest employer in the country was crippled over the last three years.

It was also important to rebuild some relationships with the government, to ensure we continue to work collaboratively and have an open line of communication as a business association, representing our industry's needs. We brought operators to have conversations with these government policymakers and MPs – to tell real stories, for them to hear what's actually happening in the restaurants. There are so many things the industry brings to the economy, to their communities, to the people that work within their buildings. There's a dependency on this industry and we want to make sure that that it was, it was clear. That our needs were clear.

MM Can you describe the preparations and the collective headspace of the RC delegation leading up to Day on the Hill? What were you sort of hoping to achieve?

KH: *Emotionally there was a real desire to make sure we open the doors of communication again and reset the relationship with government. Obviously, the last three years has been a strain on everybody, and we recognize the government was also under an incredible amount of pressure. I think for our goal as an association and for the members we brought there, was for all of us to have an open dialogue. It wasn't about bringing your pitchfork and blame. It really was a collaborative effort to make sure we could join forces with the government. Work together to find solutions that would benefit our industry and therefore benefit Canada.*

MM When you got there who were you able to meet with directly?

KH: *We had the largest Day on the Hill that has happened this year and one of the largest they've had in many, many years. We had almost 60 meetings with several MPs, we also met with some policy advisors to the Prime Minister and some members of the research team which was valuable for us. Because one of the unique facets of our association is the amount of research. We have a chief economist and Chris Elliot's research is so valuable to the government because they just don't have the ability to pull the data that we do for our specific industry. To be able to present some of the issues, for example, our industry is trying to recover but the restaurants are, on average, operating at 80 per cent capacity because of labour issues. For the MPs and policymakers to understand what that means and how that*

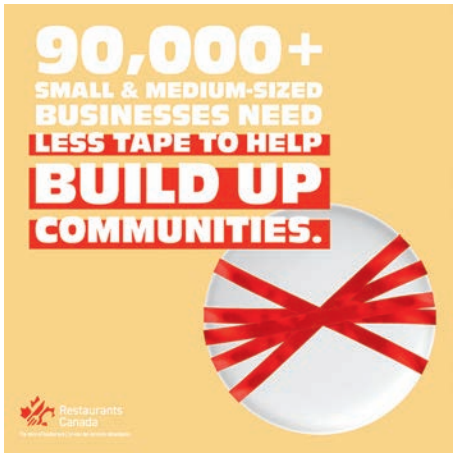
There's an understanding this is going to be a longer recovery than any of us had anticipated and that we're all being presented with some unique challenges. They were receptive to all our needs. A short time later there were some big policy announcements and commitments made to our immigration policies that streamline things to make it easier for our industry to get labour.

affects recovery. Then we have operators who are trying to pay back loans. For example, some of the loans some restaurants have can't be paid back because they can don't have full capacity in the restaurants, and they are unable to open with full operating hours because of labour shortages. So it's just piling on piling on piling on. It was important for us to talk about that and take policy advisors through what's really going on.

MM What was the response like? How did the team feel at the end of The Day on the Hill?

KH: *It was a really positive two days of meetings. We request meetings with every single MP, but for us to get that many responses were phenomenal. It showed us they wanted to speak to us and understand what's happening out there. There's an understanding this is going to be a longer recovery than any of us had anticipated and that we're all being presented with some unique challenges. They were receptive to all our needs. A short time later there were some big policy announcements and commitments made to our immigration policies that streamline things to make it easier for our industry to get labour. We're really pleased with the reception on both sides - we met with a lot of the opposition as well. With the shadow cabinet, there was a real understanding of our industry's needs.*





With, the Liberals we certainly felt that there's a lot of frustration about what happened during COVID-19, but they really did provide us with some lifelines like rent subsidies and wage subsidies, which meant more restaurants are here today. There was a sense like we've all been through this together.

MM What were the reactions from the different political parties?

KM: *One thing we were able to do was to ensure all parties are supportive of this industry being successful. If they made a commitment to immigration, as they did, they made commitments beneficial to us. There isn't going to be blowback from another party. All parties were clearly understanding Canada has a labour crisis, affecting retail food service – which is a valuable economic driver. The labour shortage isn't a partisan issue – it's an issue on either side of the aisle you sit on. Supply chain issues are going to be a challenge for the country and for Canadians as well. There was nothing we presented that one party wouldn't support simply because another party was supporting it.*



The Honourable Seamus O'Regan addressing the room at Restaurants Canada's 2022 Day on the Hill reception



I think one of the great things I've seen throughout the pandemic is a rallying of the industry where we understand we are all kind of dependent on each other

MM Apart from the Restaurants Canada team, who did you bring with you to Day on the Hill?

KM: *We had nearly 50 operators there, which was fantastic. This industry is diverse. We have large chains, chains that are part of franchises – which means a lot of independent owners. We have small mom and pop operations, which contributes to dynamic communities. I think one of the great things I've seen throughout the pandemic is a rallying of the industry where we understand we are all kind of dependent on each other, and we need to unite to bring our issues forward. We also had representation from across the county – it was a really great mix of independents and chains.*

MM There were delegates from different places in Canada. Were they in any way involved in the development of your priorities?

KH: *Definitely. Yeah, Chris Elliot, our chief economist, conducts member surveys all the time to understand the key issues. Our lobby efforts in late July coincided with our biggest surveys of the year and one of our biggest research pieces which is the Food Service Facts. This had really challenging data in it about the state of our industry. What we learned was we were really hoping for a bigger recovery period and some frightening data about where we're headed in 2023. We had a lot of information that came directly from our membership. We also have a Board of Directors comprised of operators, so we get a lot of feedback through them as well.*

MM What was the reception like?

KH: *The reception we received is indicative of our connection to the industry. After Day on the Hill, we held an event at the Riviera Ottawa. We served 100 per cent Canadian products and it was it was beautifully done. The reception was packed with high-level MPs policymakers. The who's who of Ottawa came out and just wanted to talk to our members and connect with them. It's indicative of the importance of the industry and what we bring to Canadian economy. But also more importantly, what this industry brings to the communities we serve.*

MM Did the members feel heard?

KH: *I do think they felt heard. We can talk about these issues but they're feeling it in real time. For example, when some of our operators were on the hill, they're also trying to deal with scheduling issues back at their restaurant. Somebody wants to book a large 100-person party at their place but they don't know how to staff it. The challenges were made real.*

MM Day on the Hill, is not a one and done. What's next?

KM: *It's a constant effort. Our team works daily on issues. The large immigration policy that was announced on November 1, with an increasing number of permanent residents with a goal of reaching 500,000 in 2025 was due in part to our lobbying efforts. This now gets spread out to the provinces to manage. So now our lobby efforts are ramping up provincially, to make sure our industry is allocated and considered when looking at immigration. There's a lot of sustainability discussions happening across the country. So we're trying to find some alignment and some consistency. We're trying to work on membership, knowledge, and education, as well of all of the different pieces of the sustainability programs happening because it is municipal. It's going to be challenging for some of our members.*

MM What I'm hearing is the work is never done.

KH: *Exactly. There's always something our government relations team is working on. We have other efforts going on as well - whether it's in alcohol, looking at third party party delivery. There's always a good basket of issues. Our primary focus is going to be supply chain, tourism, immigration and working in a coalition with other associations – like other retail councils and other business associations. We want to make our lobbying efforts heard.*

MM Any final thoughts?

KH: *The most important thing for us to remember is that all these things – supply chain, labour, debt, inflation - are fine for us to talk about. But our members are really dealing with all of these significant challenges in real time. Our team needs to continue doing our job and deliver what we committed to delivering and make sure that we continue to work with the government to ensure that it works for our industry.*

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Dispatch from the 2022 Canadian Restaurant Investment & Leadership Summit

The annual Canadian Restaurant Investment & Leadership Summit brings a group of hospitality CEOs together for a rare opportunity to engage with sector thought leaders and exchange peer-to-peer perspectives on the Canadian hospitality industry.

Hosted by Canadian Western Bank (CWB), the idea for the Summit came from U.S. events that sought to bring sector leaders together around the topics related to restaurant development and growth through a leadership lens. With no similar opportunities in Canada, a small group of GE Capital determined to create a domestic event in Toronto. Since the team's move to CWB in 2016, the event has only grown in credibility and influence. Now in its 12th year, the 2022 Summit took place in Toronto on November 3rd, with its first-ever Vancouver event following on November 10th.

"We've been hosting this event for 12 years now," says Jacob Mancini, AVP, Restaurants & Breweries, CWB Franchise Finance at Canadian Western Bank. "The foundation of the summit was formed through a couple of events that we used to attend in the U.S. that really focused on the restaurant industry from a different viewpoint than just operations. These events were built around concepts of investment development and growth and focused on leadership and the higher thought processes around what operators and business owners were doing to grow and remain competitive in the space. At that time, there wasn't anything similar in Canada. Even now, most sector shows and conferences are targeted towards folks on the operations side or culinary side, not on the management and leadership side of things. We really wanted to create this environment where senior leaders could come together and network."

Over the years, the event has provided not only a forum for the exchange of information





but performed as a sort of ad hoc incubator of ideas and connections. "Over the years we'd hear stories about how groups or individual attendees would get together and new things and thinking would come from that," says Mancini. "Whether or not it was mergers and acquisitions-level stuff didn't matter. Just getting together and figuring out common challenges or having private, unplanned conversations with peers—the opportunity was there and the value to the industry was clear."

Mancini's division of CWB is a specialized lending group within the bank, focused on hotel, restaurant and hospitality lending. They take the view that despite current challenges within the sector, growth will continue, if a little cautiously for now. "It's very consistent industry. Restaurants are always going to be here, and they're always going to be an important place just about every consumer—no matter who they are—utilizes. It's a very large, far-reaching segment. Despite some of the near-term challenges and risks, once you hit a certain amount of scale and infrastructure, well-managed brands are actually quite stable and consistent. If you're doing the right things and have proof of concept, you can grow. The last three years have shown how important restaurants are to the fabric of society. The topline sales numbers have never been as strong as they are these days."

Mancini takes the investor's view that, brands that were well-managed and stable going into the pandemic have largely retained that stability and value even through the rollercoaster ride the past few years. "If you were successful before, odds are you will be after the fact," he predicts. "What we keep an eye on now is how people are adjusting and responding to challenges. Were you able to successfully pivot your model to takeout and delivery when perhaps you didn't have that line in place previously? Are you able to capture what customers are looking for now and in the future—that experience piece?"

These are some of the questions, challenges and insights dissected in the summit program and panels, with the presentation of the NPD data and the CEO panel the most anticipated sessions by delegates from both large and small restaurant groups. "If you're a smaller operator or brand there's real benefits and real enjoyment to being in the same room with C-level executives at big brands. We often hear feedback from all delegates that having a chance to meet a certain individual, talk to or hear from them is really interesting, motivating and insightful. Big brands are also really intrigued by hearing about what smaller, operators who are maybe more nimble or more creative are doing. It speaks to the importance of creating these networking opportunities that really didn't exist before this event."

This year's CEO panels included Daniel Frankel, CEO of Tap & Barrel Group, Ritou Maloni, Co-founder, President an d COO of Pür & Simple, Hadi Chahin, CEO of MBI Brands, Jordan Holm, President of Boston Pizza International, Peter Mammas, CEO of Foodtastic, and legendary entrepreneur and CEO and owner of FDF Restaurant Brandz, Frank di Benedetto. Peter Mammas acknowledged the importance of the event and participating in the panel and gave an indication of the leadership perspective on what lies ahead for the sector. "I really enjoyed being on the panel and sharing my thoughts about the restaurant industry. The last 30 months have been difficult for many, but we have been resilient, we survived, and are now we are ready to grow." Hadi Chahin agreed. "The Canadian restaurant landscape has room for all brands and concepts to grow and succeed. The key is to build a great support team, stay innovative and never accept the status quo."

While it's fair to say that most current operators are plugged in and acutely focused on market forecasts, there was lively discussion and a few surprises during the event. Chris Elliott, Chief Economist & Vice President,

I really enjoyed being on the panel and sharing my thoughts about the restaurant industry. The last 30 months have been difficult for many, but we have been re- silient, we survived, and are now we are ready to grow."

~ Peter Mammas, CEO of Foodtastic

Research at Restaurants Canada, moderated the Hot Topic Panel Discussion, which focused on the opportunity within the disruption within the industry and which technologies and ideas will define the path toward future industry success. "I presented the stat that restaurants sector ranks 208 out of 210 industries when it comes to labour productivity, which led to a few audible gasps. Given that labour shortages are here to stay, the only way to grow the business is by improving labour productivity and embracing technology and automation. There is certainly room for growth in this area." Elliott also notes that rising food prices and the looming economic slowdown were topics that held the attention of the room.



"These people have gone through the last few years we're not out of this yet," Mancini agrees. "We're hopefully cycling in the right direction. The mood at the Summit was 'cautious optimism'. While most are really, really happy with how things have gone last few years in terms of the way that they were able to rebound and manoeuvre their brands to continue to be successful, they absolutely recognize some of the challenges on the horizon, particularly with respect to labour. Labour and technology were by far the biggest talking points of this event. These leaders realize that there's going to be a tough couple of years despite the recent topline success. They know it's going to continue to be difficult to make money."

While previous events accommodated 300-400 people, the planning team opted to keep this year's events intimate and focused, with registration open to just 90 delegates to increase the quality of attendee experience and opportunity. "We wanted to learn whether something a bit smaller and simpler, but more targeted would better serve the Summit group. Early feedback was they really enjoyed it. It expanded the tent a little bit for folks from Vancouver who maybe didn't see the value of flying out to Toronto. I think that and the intimacy really resonated. The targeted piece was really kind of instrumental. Everyone felt like they had if they were somebody they wanted to talk to, they had an opportunity to talk to them."

Coming out of the Summit, Mancini notes many restaurants have been able to increase prices in line with rising costs without necessarily losing business as a consequence. "It shows that people still really, really want to use restaurants, right? Whether that's for an event or an experience or just the convenience of going to drive through or ordering delivery. Margins are under pressure from supply chain issues and inflation, labour and immigration. There are clear challenges right now in the industry, but there's no question the demand for it is there. It's very clear this industry is not going to go away."

"I presented the stat that restaurants sector ranks 208 out of 210 industries when it comes to labour productivity, which led to a few audible gasps. Given that labour shortages are here to stay, the only way to grow the business is by improving labour productivity and embracing technology and automation. There is certainly room for growth in this area."

- Chris Elliott, Chief Economist & Vice President, Research at Restaurants Canada

Registration for the 2023 Canadian Restaurant Investment & Leadership Summit opens in spring 2023. Learn more at: restaurantsummit.ca

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Support the restaurant industry by addressing workplace mental health.

BY HASSEL AVILES,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NOT 9 TO 5


photo by Clay Williams

“I have lived with mental illness in the form of depression, social anxiety and trauma. If I ever mentioned this about myself at work, I was told to check my emotions at the door—as if it’s possible to separate myself from my humanity. Instead of open dialogue, support and resources for workplace mental health, there was stigma and shame. This made my career in hospitality a lonely experience.”

A career-long veteran of Toronto’s hospitality industry, Hassel Aviles has two decades of lived experience with both the dividends and demands of restaurant culture. From front-of-house and behind-the-bar roles, she went on to helm many large catering, culinary and food events in Toronto. Instead of celebrating her success, Hassel found herself feeling anxious, exhausted and undervalued.

Looking inward at her own mental wellness inspired her to co-founded Not 9 to 5, a non-profit advocacy organization that provides resources and safe space communities to support workplace mental health and substance use education for the industry and people she cares for and believes in. Not 9 to 5’s online education platform, CNECTing, has expanded and democratized the organization’s resources to help promote the creation of positive, proactive and inclusive hospitality work environments worldwide.

In this edition of The Column, Hassel reminds operators of the importance of helping and listening to their staff through the sometimes difficult holiday period and beyond, and offers the supports and resources to do it.

I’m often asked if I could rebuild restaurants what would I do differently? Based on the research and data I have been reviewing and collecting over the last three years, the one actionable step I recommend is mandatory training for psychological safety. This article will explore the need for and impact of prioritizing workplace mental health in the hospitality industry.

After working in every frontline service job out there, owning a restaurant for a few years, and consulting on many others, I know first-hand the impact this would have. We need to learn how to prioritize psychological safety and mandate mental health education to leaders, owners, managers and anyone else who makes business decisions that impact the workplace. Why? Because it helps to protect and unlock the potential of the biggest asset of the hospitality and culinary industry: the people. We have to remember we are not in the business of culinary and beverage products; we are in the business of people who happen to serve food and drinks. The traditional restaurant business model is antiquated. It has been neglecting workplace mental health for centuries and, as a result, often creates toxic work environments. Restaurants continue to hemorrhage money to turnover costs and experience labour challenges with many achieving only low, single-digit profit margins. This is all interconnected, and one truth impacts the other.

Like many fellow restaurant workers and owners I worked with during my fifteen years working in service, I have lived with mental illness in the form of depression, social anxiety and trauma. If I ever mentioned this about myself at work, I was told to check my emotions at the door—as if it’s possible to separate myself from my humanity. Instead of open dialogue, support and resources for workplace mental health, there was stigma and shame. This made my career in hospitality a lonely experience. Even though I was constantly surrounded by vast amounts of people and most of my colleagues were also struggling, no one addressed it openly or directly in the workplace. In early 2018, I chose to

“We have to remember we are not in the business of culinary and beverage products; we are in the business of people who happen to serve food and drinks.”





challenge the status quo and make a career change, intersecting my foodservice background with my lived mental health experience. I co-founded a non-profit called Not 9 to 5. The work we do was founded on instinct and is now cemented in data. Our humble beginning as a local, grassroots initiative quickly grew our organization into a global leader in mental health advocacy and education for the hospitality sector with partners in the U.S., U.K. and beyond. In addition to community support, we've received almost half a million dollars in Canadian federal funding that has allowed us to collect research and data that informs mental health resources, tools and support for the foodservice sector.

As the executive director of Not 9 to 5, I primarily focus on practical education about psychological safety. This workplace term was coined by Harvard University organizational behaviour scientist Amy Edmondson, and my preferred definition for psychological safety is: "an environment where people feel it is safe to show up as their authentic self, make mistakes, be vulnerable with each other, give and receive feedback and take risks without any fear of negative consequences to how they'll be perceived or for their job itself". This goes against the widely accepted brigade system mentality of sacrificing yourself in the name of efficiency. It demands we abolish the outdated and inefficient idea that vulnerability is a weakness and stop demanding staff suppress any and all emotional experiences. Toxic work culture creates shame and stigma around mental health and substance use challenges, this in turn prevents folks from seeking and accepting help when needed.

Many folks claim that the biggest issue in restaurants is inadequate pay. Although low wages definitely need to be addressed industry-wide, a toxic work environment and culture is ten times more powerful than compensation in predicting a company's attrition rate and employee turnover.[1]
On the opposite extreme, psychological safety has many benefits. Just to name a few: it increases employee retention, creativity, collaboration, innovation and a hefty return on investment for every dollar invested. Every dollar spent on workplace mental health and support for your team is an investment in your business, not an expense. Studies show that employers supporting workplace mental health see a return of $4 for every $1 invested[2]. Creating a psychologically safe work environment is the gift that keeps on giving. Not only does it help manage labour issues, workplace culture and employee engagement according to Google, one of the world's largest employers, but it is also the most important factor for high-performance, productivity and effectiveness.

Since restaurants have been neglecting workplace mental health for centuries,

"Although low wages definitely need to be addressed industry-wide, a toxic work environment and culture is ten times more powerful than compensation in predicting a company's attrition rate and employee turnover."

our industry lacks the language, education or training to create psychological safety. The impact is that we end up with toxic workplaces where repression and suppression of any emotion other than anger becomes status quo. This unfortunately becomes a pressure cooker of fear and shame. There is also a complicated history that shows us racism, sexism and ableism present in the foundation and history in the hospitality industry. This has led to white supremacy culture, sexual harassment and abuse becoming normalized in restaurants and bars. It is no mystery that the pandemic led to 'the great resignation' and major labour retention issues. High turnover costs in restaurants show us that it costs a business more to neglect these issues than it does to address them. Hospitality and culinary

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> “As the holidays approach, the restaurant industry enters one of the busiest and high- stress times of the year. Many guests consider it a wonderful season, but for most industry professionals it is an especially difficult and lonely few months.”

professionals are in dire need of workplace support, resources and training. At the end of the day, everyone has mental health and no one is unaffected by the last few years, as there has never been a more important time to focus on psychological safety.

Since the pandemic, we’ve entered a new era in reimagining and rebuilding the restaurant and hospitality industry. One of the reasons is because our sector is one of the hardest hit. Frontline workers in retail, accommodation and restaurants are among the lowest paid across all industries and most have no remote work options. Many hospitality workers are from marginalized groups, including racialized communities, immigrants, genders that are not men and youth, who are disproportionately impacted[3]. The great resignation is not about a labour shortage. It is a reflection of the shortage of workplaces that offer adequate compensation, support, physical and psychological safety, resources and training. Employees now have different perspectives, more options and new opportunities available to them so leaving an industry that is harmful has become an easier choice. Gaining mental health education and language for understanding emotional experiences helps people learn new ways to navigate and cope. It helps to shed judgment and replace it with support skills by adopting more appropriate vocabulary and learning how to identify common symptoms. With support skills, we begin to understand how to help people feel less alone in a time of need. It is important to acknowledge that we can offer support for mental health just like we do with first aid and physical health. When someone cuts their hand, as a manager you are not expected to stitch that person up. Instead, with their consent, you connect them with a more appropriate medical professional. It can be the same for mental health. When someone is struggling or seeking support, we can practice active listening skills and offer to refer them to a professional or other support of their choice.

As the holidays approach, the restaurant industry enters one of the busiest and high-stress times of the year. Many guests consider it a wonderful season, but for most industry professionals it is an especially difficult and lonely few months. Whether it’s feeling drained from the financial stress, experiencing loneliness from personal loss or missing family in a time when everyone comes together, the holidays can really put a strain on mental health. The quickest way to build psychological safety for team members is to support each other through hard times. We must be able to talk about difficult, messy or sad topics, and have tough conversations with colleagues—even if these interactions can be challenging. We can’t be focused solely on efficiency. The WHO essentially defines burnout as a workplace or occupational phenomenon resulting from chronic workplace stress[4]. This means that employers play a role in employee burnout management and, more importantly, prevention. The way organizations support their team during periods of trauma is powerful. The holiday season is intense and many of us are still reeling from the impact of the pandemic and the last few years. When we are in crisis, many of us look to our workplace to support and protect us. If this doesn’t happen, or if they harm us or those we care about, this creates a second injury. This is called institutional betrayal, a term coined by psychologist Jennifer Freyd, who describes it as “occurring when an institution you trust or depend upon mistreats you[5]”. On the opposite extreme, we can practise psychological safety and create a work environment where people feel supported, seen, heard and held.

As we close out the year, I am here to remind you that there is help available for embarking on change in the hospitality industry. If you or anyone in your company is

in need of mental health resources, or ready to address psychological safety in restaurants and beyond, visit www.not9to5.org to learn more. We've created an online education platform called CNECTing that is free to join. Once there, you can download our workplace mental health guidebook, access industry data and resource lists or invest in ground-breaking certification courses. These can all help you develop your support skills as well as gain tools to identify, understand and respond to mental health and substance use challenges for yourself and others.

After seeing so much change in the last two years, I have never felt more hopeful that the past does not define the future of restaurants. We are in an era of expanding our understanding of what we have known the industry to be and have increased access to concrete evidence of the power of psychological safety in the workplace. Other industries have been implementing these vital changes in the workplace; it's now time for restaurants to join.

Those do not engage with the data or adapt will get left behind.



Not 9 to 5 is a non-profit global leader in mental health advocacy for the foodservice and hospitality sector, reimagining the industry by breaking stigmas and fuelling hope through practical education and meaningful community-building. Their vision is physical and psychological safety for the entire hospitality and culinary workforce, aspiring to normalize mental health training, sick leave, workplace accommodations, healthcare benefits, support and resources to all. www.not9to5.org

Not 9 to 5 created CNECTing for hospitality professionals to access educational content and mental health training. Join CNECTing to access industry-specific resources including CNECTed, a groundbreaking training and certification course to develop mental health and substance use support skills. Join CNECTing + get CNECTed certified. www.not9to5.org/cnecting/

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MINDFULNESS & MONEY:



A free program designed to build confidence and empower entrepreneurs Presented by Interac Corp. and Conscious Economics

***This fall**, Interac and Conscious Economics joined forces to offer Mindfulness & Money, a free digital learning program that provides assessment tools and resources designed to reframe the way entrepreneurs think and feel about money. "Interac is proud to work with Conscious Economics to broaden access to tools that support diverse entrepreneurs, and all Canadians, in being more financially confident," says Daria Hill, VP, Marketing & Communications at Interac. "We hope that entrepreneurs find this digital learning program helpful in bringing more control over their own money, strengthening their businesses for tomorrow."*

Mindfulness & Money was created and backed by a team of financial experts with an interest in changing the way Canada's diverse group of business owners think about and take control of their finances. The community-led program is the brainchild of Rhiannon Rosalind, CEO of Conscious Economics, a Canadian not-for-profit organization and global social enterprise. It's designed to educate and inspire entrepreneurs by looking at work, money and business through a lens of mindfulness and well-being.

Sound a little out there? So do most disruptive ideas.

"It's been difficult few years for businesses," Rosalind states. "Particularly in the restaurant industry. Mindfulness & Money can help people recognize and understand their subconscious blocks or patterned financial choices that are either preventing them from reaching goals or leading them to the same spot over and over again. They may have accepted this as their "normal" instead of reaching out for tools, support or help. They may feel like there's a level of shame or embarrassment in that or a secret they need to keep. I know this is true for many entrepreneurs, because it's true for me. We start with a conversation and then give people some tangible tools and practices to start uncovering and ultimately unblock what's down there in the subconscious that may be affecting their financial confidence and success."

Far from preaching from above, Rosalind's experience and successful incorporation of mindfulness principles into business and financial practices is lived, human and highly personal. "It may seem strange to talk about your business and find yourself going back to your childhood, but as a business owner, I was perpetually in a state of some kind of chaos. I was always on the edge with work and deadlines. Growing up with a lot of uncertainty in my home made me comfortable in chaos, but not effective. As a business owner, I was subconsciously recreating that chaos so that I could solve the problem, as I did in my childhood home. But, I don't actually want to live and work in chaos.

Rosalind summarizes her company's approach to increasing entrepreneurial confidence like this: "Conscious economics is built around the idea that the things we avoid the most are often the things in our lives that deserve the most attention. It's about realizing that if you take the things you want to avoid and give them a little bit of consciousness—which is just awareness toward that thing—you can probably shift it."





Conscious Economics

Conscious Economics is a national not-for-profit organization and global social enterprise headquartered in Canada, with a 10-year history and proven track record in economic education, financial literacy programs, research, events and experiential learning. While they engage with all communities, they maintain a specialized focus on vulnerable populations including BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, Women and Artists.

consciouseconomics.ca

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TIP-OUTS:



How even the most transparent tip-out processes can expose operators to tax liability

In 2020, a popular restaurant in Nova Scotia was assessed by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The CRA found that a certain amount of the servers' electronic gratuities collected between 2015-17 were subject to EI and CPP deductions, for which the employer was liable. In 2020, the operator took the case to Tax Court and lost. The restaurant appealed, taking the case to the Federal Court of Appeal which, in a written decision in August 2022, found in favour of the CRA. They ruled that "due-backs" were in fact "controlled tips," and therefore were "contributory salary and wages of the employee paid by the employer." In short, the restaurant's tip-out system was classified as a controlled tip system, which meant the gratuities collected for staff disbursement were considered insurable earnings and subject to CPP and EI deductions under the *Employment Insurance Act*.

The potential liability for operators lies in the gap between the CRA interpretation of controlled tipping versus direct tipping systems, and the realities of how gratuities are collected in contemporary times. According to the CRA, "controlled tips" refers to "tips that an employer controls or possesses and then must pay to the employee." It then follows that electronic tips are "possessed" by the employer based on the reality that, for these gratuities to be paid out to employees, they must be electronically received and held in the employer's account, however temporarily. CRA does consider electronic gratuities briefly held by the employer and paid out within a prescribed timeframe cited as "at the end of each shift" as meeting their criteria for a direct tip.

To avoid liability, restaurants must have tip-out system that meets the definition of "direct tipping", which the CRA defines as follows: "Direct tips are paid directly by the customer to the employee. The employer has no control over the tip amount or its distribution. The employer is merely a conduit for the tip from the customer to the employee." There is a lot of room for interpretation and error between controlled and direct tips.

"What is needed is to get CRA to provide the industry with further clarification around "direct tip" versus "controlled tip", says Richard Alexander, Vice President Atlantic at Restaurants Canada. Alexander has been working with government counterparts to push for updates to CRA definitions drafted in a time when the majority of transactions used cash.



Now, in a nearly cash-free transaction system, electronically remitted gratuities are the norm. "Electronic gratuities are the same as cash gratuities," Alexander asserts. "The problem is the interpretation. We're working with definitions from a time when everyone was carrying cash in their pockets. That's the representation Restaurants Canada has made to the Minister of National Revenue. Treating electronic gratuities the same as cash is common sense to people, and it's common sense to the minister, so we've asked for a little bit more guidance and leniency when it comes to this issue."

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~ Richard Alexander, VP Atlantic, Restaurants Canada

James Rhodes, Canadian taxation lawyer, has been working on the issue with Restaurants Canada to help operators understand compliance and liability as relates to their tip-out processes. He found himself at the centre of the debate based on his work with larger multi-unit restaurant brands on taxation and tip-out processes and because he, "just likes the topic."

Rhodes estimates about 60 per cent of restaurant gratuity systems in Canada are not in full compliance with what the CRA wants. "Most restaurants are unaware they have a problem and that they might be held liable for CPP and EI contributions—not only as the employer, but as the employee—on gratuities received. In the case of the Nova Scotia restaurant, was a $100,000 problem and that was just three years. That was also three years ago and, if they hadn't made any changes, that's a $200,000 problem—and that's one restaurant out of a chain of restaurants. So, the problem is that most restaurants are unaware of potential liability should they be audited by the CRA and found not to have a direct tip system. They think they have it, but they actually don't."

"If you look at the CRA's guidance, it's two pages—just two pages to guide someone between a $100,000 problem and a zero dollar problem. I always refer to it as "walking a tightrope." If you get one thing wrong the entire system defaults to being considered a controlled tip system, and there's your liability. A liability you didn't think you had."

Rhodes notes many of the perils are rooted in fair-minded, progressive and transparent systems restaurants put in place, like employee gratuity committees. Employees select employee representatives who manage and distribute tips transparently between all eligible employees, without the operator having to get involved or manage the system. "Some restaurants will say, "Hey, we've got an employee gratuity committee." I say, "Great! Tell me about your payout." Then they say, "Well, we collect the money, and every two weeks we give them a cheque." And that's when I let them know that they don't have a direct tip system; they have a controlled tip system. While the employees have decided the allocation of the payout, which is an important criterion for CRA, the required payout has occurred too late, in CRA's opinion. The result of the two-week payout is that CRA believes the owner has owned the payout for two weeks, and therefore controlled it, and is liable for CPP and EI deductions. Getting one thing wrong out of a list of all that's necessary will define a system as controlled and expose a restaurant to sometimes massive liability."

Rhodes compares the scenario to a 1994 Nicholas Cage movie, *It Could Happen to You*. In the film, Cage is short the cash to tip his server. Instead, he tips her by tearing his lottery ticket in two and giving her half. "Imagine that lottery ticket was a million dollars, and Nicolas Cage had given it to 30 people working in that restaurant, and that restaurant happened to have a controlled tipping system. That employer would be liable to pay the EI and CPP on that million dollars to those employees. Even though the employer has no control and derives no benefit from that gratuity, that sleeping liability could end the business."

Alexander notes there is no consistent method restaurants use to manage their tip-outs. They have systems in place that work for their operational scenario and employee group. "I took 60 calls after the first webinar. After the second webinar, I took probably eight to 10 calls. A lot of the calls are similar. If operators listen to the webinar, they'll understand what they have to do. But all the same, operators may have a specific situation and they want an answer to, 'Is this okay?', 'Am I gonna get in trouble by doing this?', and there's no hard and fast answer. I just got back

from Halifax and the three operators I spoke with about this issue are all going and getting cash—sometimes $20, 30 or 40 thousand dollars in cash—and putting it in a safe to use that to pay out. That's a high risk and unsafe solution. Also, most banks to have a lot of cash on hand anymore, so it's not necessarily practical or reasonable either."

Rhodes agrees. "Where we are now, the solution for every restaurant is a cash float. For higher-volume restaurants, that's a bigger problem. They have to carry a lot more cash. CRA says that if you pay out all tips, cash and electronic, in cash by the end of the shift they will view that as a direct tip. But, what if it's two or three o'clock in the morning at the end of the shift? CRA does allow next-day tip-outs, but in "extraordinary circumstances." A lot of restaurants think that's okay, but the Nova Scotia restaurant that just lost at the Federal Court of Appeal was paying out tips the next day by electronic funds transfer, and it wasn't okay. So, right now, the only solution I can tell people will meet an auditor's criteria is they have a cash float."

The approach that Restaurants Canada has taken is focused first and foremost on education. We're educating members through the webinars now, and also working on a tipping best practice document to share with members. It's an education and risk reduction strategy for now. That should help the immediate concerns around liability in the industry. But but moving forward, I think we need a permanent change in the CRA's guidance when it comes to electronic tipping."

Restaurants Canada estimates about 90 per cent of all gratuities are collected electronically. If only 10 percent of tips come in as cash paid directly to employees, how do operators completely avoid all tip-out liability? According to Rhodes, for now, the only 100 per cent compliant solution is a cash payout at the end of each shift. "At the end of the day, the real legal answer for these cashless times is that until someone gets dual payment processing into market, there is some liability for restaurants. If that gratuity amount went to a separate bank account that was owned by an employee gratuity committee, that is the end of every restaurant's worries. And so, in the first presentation I did for Restaurants Canada, I was talking about the need for someone to develop dual processing technology for the industry because it is the solution to every restaurant's problems. That would be my Christmas wish."

> **"In the first presentation I did for Restaurants Canada, I was talking about the need for someone to develop dual processing technology for the industry because it is the solution to every restaurant's problems. That would be my Christmas wish."**
>
> *~ James Rhodes, Taxation Lawyer*



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Federal Court of Appeal Ruling: Tips, source deductions, and how to protect yourself from liability

Originally Presented: October 6, 2022

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today



Dylan Erlendson isn't your typical financial tech company sales lead. When he joined XTM in 2019 as Vice President of Sales | Hospitality, he brought insider experience and a deep passion for the restaurant business. After studying Hospitality and Culinary Arts in Toronto, he spent time in front and back-of-house roles under the likes of Janet Zuccarini of Gusto 54, David Grutman of Groot Hospitality in Miami, Steven Salm and Michael Kimel of Chase Hospitality Group and Planta Restaurants, as well as Michelin-starred Chef Akira Back.

Erlendson worked for a large hospitality group in Toronto, which gave him first-hand knowledge of the time and effort businesses spend on gratuity management, tracking and dissemination, as well as the associated tax liability risk. "Managing tip-outs is risky and time consuming from an operation standpoint. Our technology simplifies that and saves over $50,000 a year for any restaurant with 75+ employees. The Today solution is comprised of three parts: a portal for administrators to manage gratuity payments to employees or employee gratuity committees, a smartphone



app and wallet and employee cards with free banking features. Employees pay no fees to spend with the card because XTM has a share in the merchant interchange when a POS transaction takes place. The card can be used at any merchant, anywhere in the world, and employees can also take advantage of exclusive rewards offerings they can redeem with national brands like Sephora, Xbox, Sonos, Walmart and Best Buy, with more to come."

When an employee is hired by a Today-enabled restaurant, they receive information on how to download and use the app and a personal Mastercard tied to their wallet that stays active even when employees change employers. Earned gratuities are deposited daily into their Today account wallet and that employee may use those funds as they wish, by using their card to make purchases, transferring their funds into other accounts or visiting a bank machine to withdraw cash. "On the staff side," Erlendson explains, "our aim is to create financial inclusion for the people who are serving everybody, and who are underserved when it comes to employee benefits and opportunities to build their financial well-being. Ultimately, we want to build an ecosystem that promotes financial health. Right now, it's cash-back rewards, a robust budgeting tool with spending insights, and easy, instant access to your money. In the future, we want to include a financial ecosystem that includes virtual healthcare insurance benefits exclusive to Today members. In the Today FInancial app, they'll be able to opt into healthcare benefits for themselves, because we have the user base now to make that happen. Hourly employees and other hospitality workers often have little to no access to health care and if we can be a big part of bringing that to the landscape, we want to do it and we feel that's really, really powerful. We're invested in being able to offer that; it means something to us."

Perhaps most crucially, Today helps bring Canadian operators a step closer to combatting the tax liability pillars of possession for controlled tips (restaurants holding gratuities in their business bank account prior to disseminating them to employee-held accounts) and time (the allowable timeframe within which CRA expects employers to disseminate tip-outs to staff). "To combat possession, XTM uses a pre-funded settlement account," Erlendson explains. "We pull a pre-authorized debit from the business account prior to revenue generation, which allows gratuities to be paid from a cloud-based holding account that functions like cash. When an employee works a shift, the business has already transferred funds to a wallet, which is immediately accessible to employee gratuity committee members who can transparently distribute those dollars to the employees who earned them within the CRA-specified, same-day timeframe. That process goes on daily throughout the week. At the end of the week, we'll pull another pre-authorized, automated debit from the business account to pre-fund the next week. It's automated so that it's always there in advance of revenue generation."

Today also saves time and adds new levels of transparency to tip-out systems. "The old-school method was usually an offline Excel document where you plug in your numbers and tell everybody what they made and show them a breakdown," says Erlendson. "XTM now offers tip calculation software that integrates right into the point of sale that is completely transparent to all employees."

The XTM team has big plans for growth and expansion in 2023 that include enhanced personalization features and the ability to promote custom, in-app offers to members. "We've seen just tremendous growth and an incredible number of restaurants joining in," Erlendson says. "We feel we are at the right time, the right place and feel privileged to serve the industry in this way. It always has been our goal to be the leader in hospitality payments."

WATCH THE FREE WEBINAR

Part 2: Federal Court of Appeal Ruling: Tips, source deductions, and how to protect yourself from liability

Originally Presented: November 8, 2022

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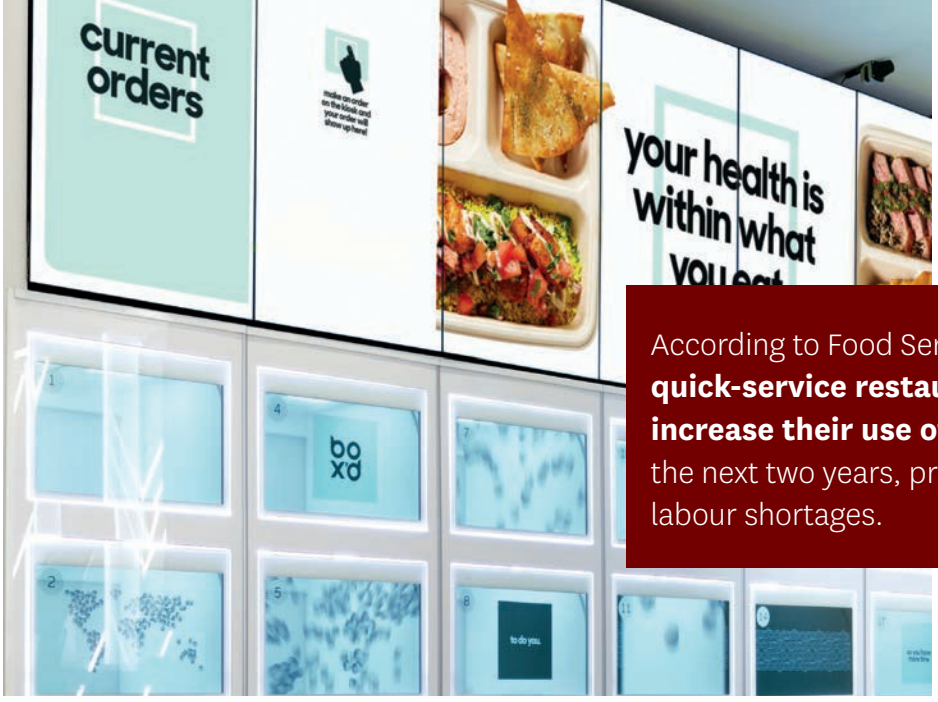
Finding Hope in Ingredient Alternatives, Food Lockers, Benefits & Beetlejuice

NIKO PAJKOVIC
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MISHAL OMAR
MANAGING INSIGHTS EDITOR
TREND HUNTER

The pandemic severely affected Canada's restaurant community. Now, instead of a reprieve, the industry finds itself amidst a second act, battling rapid inflation and the spectre of a looming recession. As Canadians brace for economic challenges in the coming months, many are already cutting out "non-essential" expenses, and the cost of food has replaced the weather as the primary topic of conversation at the water cooler, the dog park and the dinner table. Operators who survived the pandemic now face a new challenge: how to maintain or build on their success as they experience staffing issues, rising costs and declining clientele.

The team of bright minds at Trend Hunter have identified three key ways that can help foodservice businesses maintain their relevance in a constantly changing economic and social landscape–cutting operational costs through automation, prioritizing employee well-being, and attracting customers through experiences and social impact.



According to Food Service Facts 2022, **74% of quick-service restaurant operators expect to increase their use of automation technology** in the next two years, primarily to help overcome existing labour shortages.

CUTTING COSTS

Consumers are now spending significantly more on food, and Statistics Canada projects that food prices will only continue to rise over the next several months. Inflation has hit both consumers and businesses, particularly independent or small restaurants and food retailers. As food cost increases inevitably impact those in the industry, businesses are having to choose between cutting operational costs (potential loss of staff) and raising prices (potential loss of customers). While the industry struggles with these intensifying challenges, some businesses are taking this opportunity to see where they can cut operating costs in a way that enhances the customer experience rather than diminishing it.

Harsh economic pressures have triggered widespread innovation amongst restaurant operators who have begun introducing a range of novel cost-cutting strategies. Thinking pragmatically, some restaurant owners have opted to make cuts at the product or procurement level. Expensive cuts of meat and pricey foreign ingredients are being swapped for cheaper and more readily-available food options, such as eggs and shrimp. Critical to this strategy, however, is that owners are finding ways to turn these affordable alternatives into unique and exciting dishes, which allow them to justify near-identical pricing.

Elsewhere, quick-serve chains are saving money by optimizing their operations via cutting-edge technologies. According to Food Service Facts 2022, 74% of quick-service restaurant operators expect to increase their use of automation technology in the next two years, primarily to help overcome existing labour shortages.

A notable example of this comes from the adoption of smart food lockers, which are being used to optimize takeout and pickup processes. Currently, most versions of this locker-like technology adhere to the same general concept: customers order and pay for their food through an app or web browser, which is received by restaurant staff who then place the completed order in a two-way, temperature-controlled locker where it is made available for customer pickup.

In 2020, Paramount Fine Foods, a leading Lebanese food chain based out of Toronto, Ontario, introduced its own food locker technology called 'Box'd', which was developed in partnership with point-of-sale software company Givex. Similar to other food lockers, Box'd was designed to separate chefs from customers via the use of "food cubbies" that could be unlocked via customer smartphone. A major success in Toronto and a prime example of the potential of food locker technology, Box'd showcases how technology can be used to cut operational costs while improving customer experiences.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION

The pandemic, combined with growing staff dissatisfaction with unsafe work environments, reduced work hours and wages that don't meet the cost of living, has resulted in a phenomenon known as "The Great Resignation". The Canadian restaurant industry has been significantly impacted by a significant number of staff departures, with Canadian QSR and full-service restaurants in particular reporting labour shortages. Younger demographics that typically fill the bulk of service positions as they pay their way through school now expect more from potential employees, and some employers have started to address this issue by prioritizing employee benefits, wages and/or general wellbeing.

As we approach the end of 2022, restaurants in Canada are back up and running in full force; however, they are faced with a new, adjacent problem: high employee turnover rates. Confronted with increased food prices





Photo by Jody Shapiro, Antler Kitchen & Bar

and labour shortages, restaurant operators are struggling to provide employees with satisfactory wages. Keeping talented staff has become a pressing problem for business owners within this space.

Restaurant operators have once again been forced to innovate in response—this time by experimenting with new retention tactics on top of wage increases. A notably progressive example of this comes from restaurants now offering full-fledged healthcare packages, which not only support workers' needs financially but ethically.

For instance, Concorde Entertainment Group, a Calgary-based entertainment and dining company, has introduced extensive health and dental benefits for its full-time employees. The company, which has a portfolio of 21 establishments and employs over 1,200 staff, will be offering these benefits to every employee that works 32 or more hours a week. So far, that includes approximately 400 Concorde staff. In addition, the benefits will be provided alongside a family assistance program that will be offered to all company employees.

CUSTOMER ATTRACTION

Due to food price increases and higher costs of living in general, Canadians are anticipating going to restaurants less frequently in the coming months. As restaurants risk losing sales, operators can find opportunity by prioritizing experiences geared toward Millennials and Gen Z. Today's younger consumer prioritizes experience and social impact in the businesses they choose to patronize, and they are often willing to pay more for products and services that are sustainable. These demographic-led priorities offer opportunities for restaurants to pivot and engage with customers in more innovative ways.

To address the issue of declining customers, many restaurant owners are ensuring that the value of their customers' money extends well beyond the food they are served. And they are doing so by bolstering the overall dining experience offered at their restaurants.

Two standout strategies for adding holistic value to the commercial dining experience come from restaurants that focus on elevated culinary offerings and from those that have aligned their brand with a higher purpose. These tactics are particularly noteworthy because they appeal to Millennial and Gen Z consumers – two priority demographics that will be the most difficult to attract, though potentially the most rewarding, as we near recession.

Since Millennials and Gen Zs have less disposable income than other generations and because many of them consider themselves to be "conscious consumers", when they visit a restaurant, they want their spend to matter. Providing them access to novel experiences or broadening an experience to align with a progressive cause, like nose-to-tail dining, can help operators meet the moment and connect with these demographics. For those unfamiliar, nose-to-tail dining is the traditional method of cooking and eating all parts of an animal, including those that would otherwise go to waste, such as its organs, muscles and bone marrow. Aside from this re-emerging movement's food waste-reducing potential, it is also typically tied to ethical farming practices and offered by boutique restaurants that focus on food sustainability. In addition, it tends to be geared towards foodies and positioned as a unique culinary event with exciting experiential elements.

Antler Kitchen & Bar in Toronto is a one-of-a-kind, small chef-led restaurant that specializes in dishes made using ethically and sustainably-reared animals, including nose-to-tail charcuterie platters. In addition, the restaurant abides by a "locally sourced and grown" commitment and exclusively uses regional ingredients. Items on its menu include nose-to-tail charcuterie, deer ragout and unique cocktails like "Beetlejuice", which is made using locally "foraged ingredients."



Photo by Jody Shapiro, Antler Kitchen & Bar

In the coming months, the restaurant industry is in for a challenge, yet there are efforts and ideas that can help set forward-thinking businesses up for long-term impact. The seemingly insurmountable challenges triggered by the pandemic made businesses in the industry more adaptable, and the cultural changes that have taken place since are presenting exciting opportunities for businesses that are able to pivot once again.

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TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN WITH LOCAL DAIRY

The current supply and demand challenges have had a profound impact on various food items and a wide array of products and services for restaurants and consumers alike. Certainly, we are all acutely aware of unique challenges in procuring menu items that originate in distinct destinations with little or no options for alternative sourcing.

The "local food" movement is not a new phenomenon and as countless restaurant operators face obstacles in sourcing and maintaining a consistent supply of menu ingredients, it is critical now, more than ever, to take a closer look at products that come from "our own backyard". Whether it is fresh produce, centre-of-the-plate protein items or a bounty of quality dairy products, there are often countless options to explore without the need to source products that have travelled outside of the province or even outside of the country.

Dairy products in Ontario and across Canada are by nature "localized". Thousands of family-run farms produce quality milk that is processed into the many wonderful ingredients from milk to cream, cheese and butter and others that are an integral part of many menu offerings.

As a proud Restaurants Canada partner, Dairy Farmers of Ontario is happy to support the local efforts of nearly 3,400 farms that provide the milk that is processed at over 70 facilities across the province. While some of these facilities are found in the GTA based on efficiencies, many more are spread across the province and are truly a "local" source that restaurant operators should take advantage of.

Did you know that there are also 19 on-farm processors in Ontario that use milk from their own farms to produce some artisanal cheese, butter, milk and yogurt? Well, it doesn't get any more local than these grassroots suppliers. They offer exceptional quality and some unique and in-demand varieties of products, in styles and flavours you might assume you'd need to import to have on your menu.

Cheese is where "local" can deliver stand-out results by controlling supply and limiting the carbon footprint to make items available. Whether it's Gouda, Swiss-style, blue cheese, mozzarella, Asiago, Brie, bocconcini, Talleggio, quark or many others, Ontario dairy processors have it covered and the awards for craftsmanship to prove their value.

Check out the Ontario dairy guide at https://new.milk.org/Ontario-Dairy-Guide to learn more about local dairy products and where to source them.

You should feel confident in the supply chain that is right around the corner and feel proud to support local farmers and local businesses that put pride and passion into their daily efforts to provide you and your clients some of the best dairy products in the world!

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HELLO 2023: A HOSPITALITY WISHLIST FOR THE NEW YEAR

BY CHRIS SZEGO

The end of the year can offer a chance for introspection, a way to look back on what we've achieved as we begin to plan what we want to accomplish next. Of course, it also tends to be an incredibly busy period, hours and days pass by in frantic whirlwind as we hurtle toward the first of the new year, which kicks off yet another flurry of bookings (we hope) and launches a new cycle of pomp, pageantry and hope across the restaurant industry.

To mark this turn of the calendar, we reached out to Canadian restaurateurs and asked about their plans for the holidays: how (and if) they'll celebrate, what they're grateful for, and their hopes and concerns for the year to come.

PAGLIACCI'S | VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Pagliacci's is an Italian restaurant known for homestyle dishes and cinematically-named menu items. Located in downtown Victoria, Pagliacci's has been a family affair for more than 40 years. "My father started this restaurant in 1979," says co-owner Solomon Siegel. "He's still here—he'll be downstairs later today bussing tables. He's still going strong, and so are we."

With a menu featuring sharing platters and entrées with names like "A Fish Called Wanda", "The Raging Bull" and "The Shell Game", Pagliacci's has something from every genre and for every palate. If guests require low-carb, gluten-friendly, vegan or allergy-sensitive selections, Pagliacci's makes it easy—their online menu can be searched by dietary needs.

Solomon doesn't downplay the challenges of the pandemic. He feels Pagliacci's has a lot to be thankful for. "We did a lot of adapting over the past couple of years. There were parts where we slowed down a lot. But we managed to take advantage of some of the government programs that were offered, which allowed us to keep our guests fed and our staff employed throughout."

"When I look back at 2022, I'm deeply grateful for my staff and my guests—in both cases, we have the best on the planet. So many of our long-term guests continue to come here, it's a blessing. And we have the most wonderful, loyal staff. We're very lucky."

Solomon plans to share a little of that luck with his customers over the holiday season. "We light up the menorah in the restaurant every night, so our customers can take part in the tradition." And on New Year's Eve they celebrate in style. "We have a late-night seating with a five-course menu, live music, party favours, a toast at midnight—the whole shebang. It's the only night of the entire year that we take reservations."

His hopes for 2023 are simple but profound: that family and friends stay happy and healthy. "And, I'd like to expand our live music program," he adds. Currently Pagliacci's offers live music Sunday to Thursday: Solomon would like to add occasional secret, late-night concerts on Fridays and Saturdays. "I'd love to do some one-off events, when musicians are in town—the kind of thing we wouldn't even advertise because they're doing a big show elsewhere. We'd do a small dinner show; something intimate and authentic."

But most of all, Solomon hopes Pagliacci's can continue to do what they've done for more than four decades: give their regulars a place they love.









ODD COUPLE | SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN

Known for Asian dishes made with a Canadian twist, Odd Couple is a family-owned operation run by Andy Yuen and his wife Rachel, together with Andy's parents Sam and Jane. Odd Couple's menu is inspired by Cantonese, Japanese, and Vietnamese culinary traditions recreated into fun and thoughtful Can-Asian favourites.

During the pandemic shutdowns, Andy made some some difficult and atypical decisions. "I'm a professional engineer by trade. When we were closed during the pandemic, I went back to practice, and took on a few contract engineering projects." As physical offices began to reopen, Odd Couple began to cater lunches, which remain a focus. "Businesses are trying to attract staff back to the office by offering staff breakfasts and lunches. We're trying to promote that side of the business."

Odd Couple also capitalized on the desperation for novel experiences during the shutdown. "We have a series called "Travels with Odd Couple". We pick a destination, like Vietnam, then work with local suppliers to create a set menu. We offer appetizers, entrees and desserts, working with local protein providers, breweries, ice cream shops—you name it. We've done eight destinations so far; next we're going to France." The French-Asian set menu will last until the end of the year. Andy also has plans for New Year's Eve. "We want to offer a special four-course set menu for the night, with a fully vegan alternative."

As he looks ahead to 2023, Andy is cognizant of the challenges. "Do you follow the Raptors? I'm sort of like Nick Nurse: my starters are great, but my bench is short." This year, Andy was able to promote two long-time servers into management positions. He's looking forward to seeing them take on leadership roles.

Andy also recognizes the challenges facing the industry as a whole. "Food costs are really high, and there's a lack of labour everywhere. In Saskatchewan, we have one of the highest liquor taxes in the country, and you can only increase your menu prices so much. It's time to revisit our menu, possibly bring in some new items. That gives us a chance to improve."

Above all, Andy wants Odd Couple to stay true to its roots: providing regional Asian dishes with a contemporary Canadian twist. "We're not super-expensive, but not cheap. We don't want to be cheap; it's harder to find diamonds in the rough. It's up to us to find the gaps, to try to provide more value while being more efficient. Challenges are also opportunities."



MARBEN RESTAURANT | TORONTO, ONTARIO

Known for its exquisite, sustainable farm-to-table menus, Marben Restaurant is also a pioneer in employee relations and outreach. In September 2020, Marben discarded the tip-based wage model, instead raising their menu prices to boost employee compensation across the board. Doing so allowed Marben to eliminate discrimination and racism built into tip culture, providing employees with a health spending account and access to an Employee Assistance Program. Marben was an out-of-the-gate leader in offering staff a fair and tangible future in foodservice.

With menus that promote local producers and agronomists and a sister speakeasy, Cloak Bar, Marben collaborates with local farmers to bring customers the true taste of terroir. Nestled in the heart of downtown Toronto, Marben expects to be in full swing this season, hosting holiday parties for local businesses.

"Our space is very warm and cozy and leans in perfectly to the holidays," says executive chef Chris Locke. "For New Year's Eve, we will have a six-course tasting menu (with both regular and vegan options) and our guests will ring in the New Year to the tune of corks popping and champagne being poured."

Chris is looking forward to the potential offered by a new year. "I really want the city to come back alive with pop-ups and chef collaborations. This year has really been lacking in that

regard—everybody is so incredibly burnt out. What I'm really saying is that hospitality workers should be able to see some normality in their fields, with predictable days off, no staffing shortages and appropriate pay to be able to live in the city. Only then will they be able to recover and put focus and energy into doing fun and exciting things in their communities."

Looking ahead, Chef Locke would like to see more originality and variety when it comes to dining choices. "The city is being populated with more and more restaurants that belong to corporate groups. The independently-owned restaurant is dying; it is becoming too expensive to operate as a single venue. Groups are surviving due to their increased bargaining power with suppliers and economies of scale."

At Marben, Chef Locke and his team enjoy executing tailored menus, exploring experimental ferments and creating with hyper-seasonal ingredients. "I really hope that independents get a chance to breathe and don't disappear. They are the backbone of unfabricated, authentic hospitality. The more we lose, the further we get away from what restaurants really are: a home away from home."



DOG AND TIGER | TORONTO, ONTARIO

"The goal of The Dog & Tiger was always to have great, locally-sourced craft cocktails, beer and food," says owner Luke Nicholson. "When Covid happened, it allowed us to regroup and find a chef who shared that vision." New chef de cuisine Thomas Salvo has carefully curated the reimagined menu with sous chefs Josué Vergara and Damon Martin, bringing together regional farms, butcheries, fisheries, breweries and wineries to create an elevated local dining experience to their College Street location in Toronto.

With a new farm-to-table approach, The Dog & Tiger provides a chef-led menu that still feels like a neighbourhood local. To help introduce the new direction, they plan to run monthly events showcasing their new partners, including Pasture Butchery, a whole animal butcherm, and Fogo Island Fish, which provides ethically harvested fish from Atlantic Canada, and GTA-based local food distributor 100km Foods. "We're supporting a host of sustainable food providers," says Nicholson, "And we're giving guests the opportunity to be a little more open-minded, try something new, and to consider the importance of eating local."

With so much new on offer, Chef Salvo is looking forward to the holiday season to start things off on a high note. "The Dog & Tiger will kick things off with our Fogo Island dinner on November 24th and then roll right into holiday parties. Our space lends itself very well to holiday celebrations. Not only do we have the option of full-restaurant buyouts, we also have a private back room complete with a cozy fireplace to set the mood. For New Year's Eve we'll offer a three-course, prix fixe menu, with champagne and a party to follow."

In addition to the excitement of the holiday season, Chef Salvo looks forward to seeing a level of consistency when it comes to dining out in 2023. "With the rise of inflation and cost of living, the dining out expenditure for our guests has understandably declined. This leaves the restaurant industry in a very unpredictable situation. With consistent business, I hope we see a return to collaborations/pop-ups and events among industry peers. If inflation continues to rise and the cost of living in Toronto doesn't level out, I fear that dining out at restaurants will be a luxury for few."

Most of all, Chef Salvo looks forward to bringing Nicholson's visions for The Dog & Tiger to life. "For me, the product always comes first. I take pride in serving our guests the best sustainably-sourced produce, seafood and meat possible," he says, "And in always acknowledging the farmers, butchers and fisheries who supply it. It makes my job so much easier to just let the ingredients speak for themselves. We're only beginning to put our mark on the Toronto food scene."





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In 2019, pastry chef Hollie Fraser took the leap and opened her creative, fun and edgy bakery, Punk Rock Pastries. "I wanted a place of my own where I could really show my artistic side in cakes—just do what I wanted to do and make people smile," Hollie shares. "I started the business just by myself on a whim and even though I didn't have a lot of money in my pocket, I went for it, and used pretty much everything I had."

Even still, challenges outfitting the business space soon exhausted Hollie's funds. After holding two fundraisers to get Punk Rock Pastries off the ground, she finally got the doors open. "I opened with just one employee and myself," she recalls. "We had one fridge, one table, our oven, sinks, a counter and one display case." It didn't take long to realize they were bursting at the seams and needed more fridges, freezers and a larger display cabinet to accommodate their orders. "After a search, I found SilverChef."

Initially drawn to SilverChef due to their common Australian roots, Hollie reached out. "I phoned them up and had a chat. Soon, I started to get to know them personally, which was great because I'd ring them and ask them so many questions because I'm that type of person. I do my research. I ended up falling in love with this company. They have helped me out so much! They were able to help me finance a new freezer, fridge and display case for the front. They really helped our business boom out of the gate."

Just 10 months in, the pandemic arrived. "I was watching my dreams go down the drain. It was heartbreaking," she says. She rallied, and opened an online store and did deliveries, working midnight to 3 p.m. the next day. Ultimately, her efforts paid off. Punk Rock Pastries reopened and was able to to hire back staff, but word of Hollie's amazing cakes and sweets had gotten out during the closure.

"We got bigger and busier and I had to reach out to SilverChef again. I have gone from this tiny little space with no equipment to a tiny little space that had so much equipment, we had no room," she laughs.

I wouldn't have what I have without SilverChef. I've talked to them all the way through real challenges and they've helped us any way they can along the way. It's not like calling a bank. I'm talking to people with heart who want to see me thrive. I know that all I have to do is call and they'll help any way they can. They don't say no, they say, "Okay, we could go that way, but how about we try and do it this way?". There's always a solution, and I'm so grateful for that."

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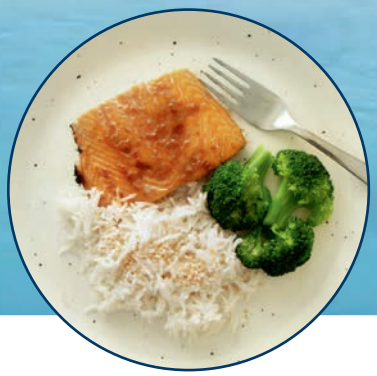
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Nourishing what's next.

Recipes from the North

BY CHRIS SZEGO



Chefs use local ingredients for many reasons; to be responsibly sustainable, to communicate a unique sense of place, to represent their stories and culture to the world. Chef Sheila Flaherty, whose passion is for sharing Inuit country food, inuksuit, with the world uses traditional local ingredients for all those reasons and more, presenting unique experiences and modern fusion takes to showcase inuksutit's appeal and versatility. But she didn't set out to do so from the beginning. In fact, Sheila started her career working in Inuit rights at the grassroots, national and international levels. Chef Flaherty is of Inuvialuk heritage through her late mother, a residential school survivor from Tuktoyaktuk, NWT. The birth of her son led Sheila to obtain a degree in psychology from the University of Ottawa. "I wanted to be the kind of mother who didn't try to prescribe a path for my child, but rather wanted to show him that if university was a path he wanted to follow, he could succeed."

Food, however, was always of personal interest. "I've always had a palate for good food thanks to my Dad, who is now a healthy 89." Her father took a course in classical French cuisine when raising Sheila and her sister, and used to make special dishes from time to time. "I have clear and fond memories of standing beside him on a dining room chair, watching him set the mise en place and prep suppers. He always allowed me to help."

Chef Flaherty has always loved feeding people good food. "That also goes back to my Dad." Preparing delicious meals for friends and family led to her first food-related job, cooking for the cast and crew for an APTN show being filmed in Toronto. "It was the first time I cooked for friends who were working. I ordered an arctic char, then had to track the poor frozen fish all over the map. First it went out to the western arctic, then was sent back, then it finally made it down to us. That was my first time making a baked arctic char with pistachio stuffing."

Geography was the turning point in Sheila's culinary career. "What really changed the game for me cooking-wise was when I made Iqaluit my home in 2010. There was a very limited number of restaurants. Three, I think, and a fast-food joint or two, all serving standard Canadian fare." She noticed the restrictions immediately. "When I was in southern Canada, yes, I liked to cook nice meals. But if I was craving Japanese food, or tapas, or Middle-Eastern dishes, I could satiate my cravings." In Iqaluit, the choices were limited.

"At the same time I realized that my husband Johnny grew up hunting and harvesting." Johnny was born and raised in Griese Ford after his family was forcibly relocated by the Canadian government from their original home in Inukjuak, Nunavik. "I knew that. But to see it with my own eyes… Our freezer was continually stocked with Inuit foods. I asked if he minded if I experimented a bit. He told me to go ahead and I wasted no time. I started to experiment with Inuit food in the summer of 2010 and haven't looked back."

There was also a practical aspect to her experiments: "Cooking was a necessity to make money." The Nunavut land claim requires Nunavut Inuit be given hiring priority in any government position: Sheila was enrolled in the Inuvialuk agreement. "The first thing I sold to community members was arctic char sushi rolls. The local Facebook sell/swap page was just starting to gain traction. I put the sushi rolls on the page one evening because I'd made too much for Johnny and I. They sold right away and I thought, 'Maybe I'm onto something here'."

Although her sushi rolls were an immediate success, leading to repeat sales and catering requests, it wasn't a smooth journey. "I had a rude awakening several months later when a municipal bylaw officer came around and gave me a fine. I was no longer allowed to sell food from my home kitchen. Everything came to a screeching halt." She stopped cooking commercially, instead taking whatever jobs she could.



Chef Flaherty on stage at The Arctic Circle Assembly 2022

But Sheila's culinary connection ran too deep to be ignored. Encouraged by family and friends, she sent in an 11th hour application to MasterChef Canada and was contacted by the producers the very next day. In 2017, Chef Flaherty was the first Inuk Chef to appear on MasterChef Canada. She was eliminated in the first round, but the publicity and exposure was profound. "Two months later, I was catering for Prince Charles and Duchess Camilla."

In 2018, Sheila switched her status from Inuvialuk to Nunavut. "After switching, I could have gone back to high-level policy positions, but I'm deep on this path that I love. I'm passionate about it." In 2019, Chef Flaherty was the first Inuk chef to create a menu for A Taste of the Arctic, a celebration of Arctic food, Inuit culture, and northern networking presented by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. She has also presented special tasting menus at food festivals in Vancouver, New York City, and Nuut, Greenland.

In October 2022, Chef Flaherty was one of three international chefs invited to cook onstage at the 2022 Arctic Circle Assembly held at Harpa Hall in Reykjavík, Iceland. She prepared two natsiaminiq (ring seal) dishes on the Circumpolar stage: a seal pâté canapé, followed by braised seal flank. She also spent a day at a local culinary school, prepping for the demonstration and sharing her experience, knowledge and techniques.

"I look at myself three years ago, in Greenland at the Nuut foodlabs. At the time I thought 'little country mouse, going to learn so much' – and I did. But I was more tentative and hesitant there, not as confident as I am today. Fast forward three years and I'm in Reykjavík, on the Circumpolar stage, having been invited on the recommendation of the Canadian embassy in Iceland. I'm definitely on more solid footing now, and I've refined my recipes. All we can ever hope for ourselves is to learn and grow."









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Iqaluk Tacos, from the Nirjutit Imaani cookbook

When it comes to personal growth, Chef Flaherty, also an entrepreneur, continues to excel. She and her husband founded sijjakkut, a 100% Inuit-owned company designed to preserve and promote traditional Inuit practices with truly harvest to table menus. "Currently we're in a pilot launch. We have some tasting menu evenings and have catered small local events." One of which was for a group of mental and cultural support workers, who came to Iqaluit to aid residential school survivors during the recent Papal visit. Eventually the plan is to expand sijjakkut into a 4,000 square foot facility that will include a commercial kitchen, a Chef's Table event space and a seven room B&B.

Sijjakkut's time frame is still being finalized. "The pandemic put a dent in our progress, but that's fine. Good things take time." Chef Flaherty enjoys the travel that comes with her work. "But the core of what I do is sit at my laptop and work towards realizing sijjakut. It's my primary preoccupation and it's not paid. I believe in it so much."

She is constantly encouraged by the enthusiastic responses she has received from diners around the world. "People are highly receptive. Inuuit leaders are doing amazing things to advance Inuit rights, in Ottawa and at the UN, but that's a high level. When I go somewhere, I meet with people outside of that realm. I interact with people on the ground. That's what I really get energy from. I am proud to share about Inuit culture. Wherever I travel, that's what I love doing: sharing Inuit culture through food. That's my jam.'

Cookbooks are another way Chef Flaherty is helping to bring inuksuitit to wider attention. *The Cookbook in Support of the United Nations: For People & Planet* is a brand-new cookbook put together by the Kitchen Collection Alliance that aims to encourage delicious, healthy, and ecologically sustainable eating for cooks around the world. *For People & Planet* features contributions from celebrity and indigenous chefs, organic farmers and food activists. Chef Flaherty contributed a recipe for cedar-planked arctic char with grilled vegetables.

In 2021, Chef Flaherty wrote the foreword for *Nirjutit Imaani: Edible Animals of the Sea*, a collection of recipes and stories from across Nunavut. Published by Nunavut Arctic College Media, Nirjutit Imaani celebrates fish and seal recipes from all three regions of Nunavut, Qikiqtaaluk, Kivalliq, and Kitikmeot. Each recipe and story is written in the specific Inuktut dialect and orthography of the community from which it hails.

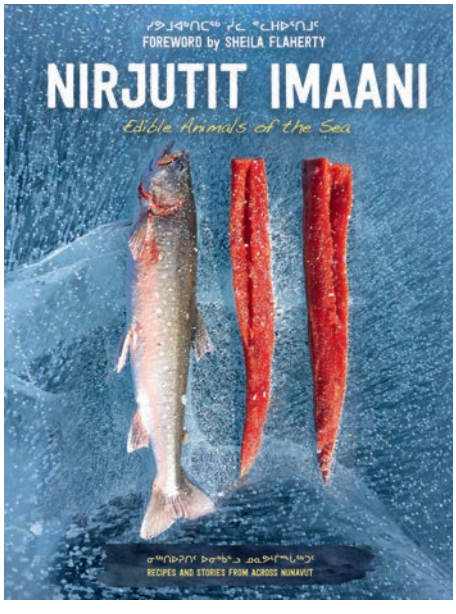
In her foreword Sheila says, "In Nunavut, food is so much more than sustenance. It holds a history of tradition, survival, medicine, storytelling, taste, place, and providing for loved ones and neighbours. Together, we share a collective identity, and an innate connection to both land and sea." Full of stories and incredible photographs highlighting the peoples, places, and tastes of Nunavut, *Nirjutit Imaani* won the Arctic category of the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in 2022. The largest international competition in the food sector, the Gourmand World Cookbook takes entries from more countries than the Olympics.

Involved in the project since its inception, Sheila was pleased to be able to meet the women who traveled through Nunavut to collect and taste-test the. "I was so glad to be asked to write the forward: it's a wonderful compilation. The stories and anecdotes are beautiful, and it gives people a glance into how we live our lives here in Nunavut."

Chef Flaherty is inspired by the many changes she has watched happen in the food sector. "In Nuut, there were so many chefs. Greenlandic Inuk chefs, and chefs from Finland, Faroe, and Copenhagen: I was the only woman." As one of three chefs on the Circumpolar Stage in Reykjavík last month, she was pleased with the improved ratio. "There wasn't a female chef in the industry I knew well enough to connect with and look to. It's changing now."

Sheila is also a director with Indigenous Culinary of Associated Nations (ICAN), whose mission is to connect, influence and share community through genuine Indigenous food experiences. She likes knowing there are other female indigenous chefs out there "It makes for great camaraderie." Most of all, she loves the way people's perceptions are changing. "Gone are the days when people believed the arctic was a food desert. There's so much going on right now – it's just so great!"

Follow Chef Flaherty's adventures on @siilaflaherty



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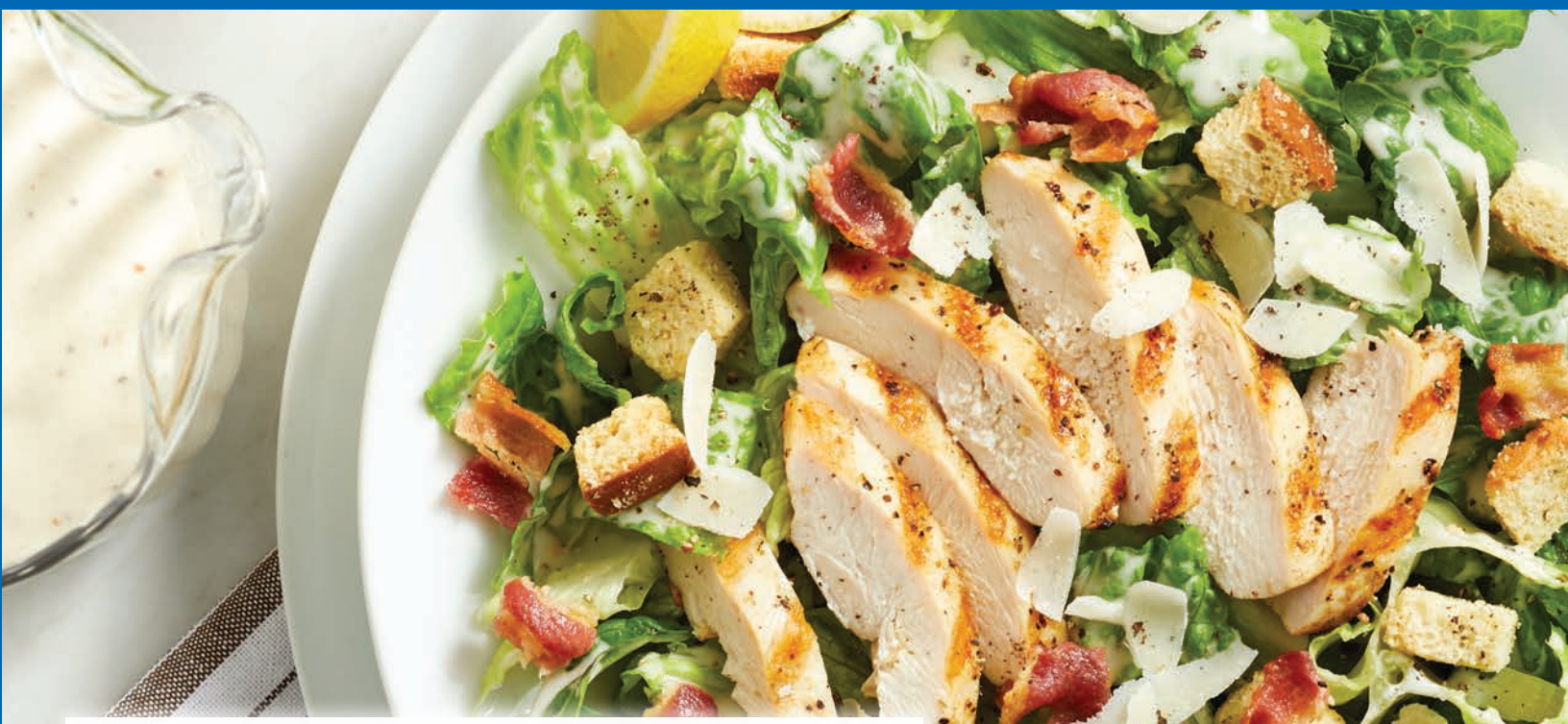
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COOKBOOKS ARE MORE THAN JUST BOOKS:

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF THE TASTE CANADA AWARDS & ANNOUNCING THE 2022 WINNERS



BY SHANNON MURPHY

For 25 years, Taste Canada has been a champion of Canadian cookbooks, with a mission of promoting, honouring and celebrating Canadian culinary writing and inspiring readers to discover appetizing recipes and diverse food stories written from a Canadian perspective. Knowing that food connects us all, Taste Canada unites food and beverage writers, publishers, chefs, restaurateurs, farmers, industry, post-secondary culinary colleges, media and cookbook fans from across the country.

While the Awards have grown over the years, they've largely been supported by the passion and goodwill of culinary industry ambassadors and volunteers in addition to loyal sponsors. Executive Director Karen Baxter acknowledges the challenges the organization has faced in gaining attention and recognition for Canadian food writing. "Cookbooks are, if I dare say, more important than fiction books. They're used every day, you pass them on to your children, you share with your neighbours. You go to them and find sustenance and comfort many times over the span of your lifetime. Other books spend the majority of their lifespan on a shelf, but cookbooks have a life of their own. They're full of the splatter and smells of a lifetime. I think it's important that Canada has its own national cookbook awards, because we're proud nation. Why do we always hear about Martha Stewart's cookbooks on CBC when our writers are just as talented, if not more?"

Taste Canada has recently earned the vital of support from Indigo for their award-winners. The bookseller has agreed to apply Taste Canada Awards seals to award-winning Canadian cookbooks in stores across the country. "It's excellent promotion for the authors," says Baxter. "They'll also be listed as award winners on Indigo's website."

This year, 87 cookbooks were entered into the Taste Canada Awards / Les Lauréats des Saveurs du Canada, Canada's only national bilingual food writing awards, with authors from nine provinces represented. The shortlist was announced in June, narrowing the competition to 45 cookbooks, representing authors from six provinces. On November 7th, the 17 gold and silver award winners were revealed at the Taste Canada Awards Gala at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel in Toronto.

The popular, chef-adjudicated cooking competition, Cooks the Books presented by Canadian Beef, took place the evening before with culinary students from across the nation competing to be named one of Canada's Best New Student Chefs, with the winners announced at the Awards ceremony. Also announced were the inductees into the Taste Canada Hall of Fame, sponsored by the Culinary Historians of Canada. Celebrating personalities who have shaped Canadian culinary writing and made a lasting contribution to Canadian culture through cookbooks, the chosen authors made an enduring impact on demonstrating the evolution of unique Cana-



TASTE CANADA AWARDS
LES LAURÉATS DES SAVEURS DU CANADA

dian cuisine through their writing. This year's inductees included the late Savella Stechishin (1903 – 2002) who for her cookbook – *Traditional Ukrainian Cookery* (1957) which is still considered the go-to English-language guide for Ukrainian cooking. She also received an Order of Canada for her work in preserving and sharing the treasures of Ukrainian-Canadian cuisine and folk art. The second inductee for 2022 was Micheline Mongrain-Dontigny, who published 14 cookbooks on contemporary and historical Quebecois cuisine. Her cookbooks celebrate traditional and contemporary recipes as prepared in both home and professional kitchens in Quebec.

The Taste Canada Awards demonstrate why cookbooks are indeed more than just books – they are in fact important cultural artifacts; records that illuminate food habits. The ways different cultures procure and prepare food provides a lens for greater understanding of culture and people. For Taste Canada that means recognizing and sharing the best published titles as an important means of defining and preserving Canada's food culture, trends, innovation, influences and history, elevating them to prominence in Canadian culture. "More than just the ingredients we consume, food is a symbol of our shared culture, varied traditions, unique history and heritage," says Donna Dooher, past chair of Taste Canada's board of directors. Taste Canada contends that "Food is at the heart of the Canadian identity". Authors who successfully share personal stories within the pages of a cookbook elevate the work to a memoir shared through food.

There is no better souvenir of a trip, or gift to a loved one, especially during the holiday season, or memory of a great meal at a restaurant than a cookbook with a clear voice that expresses and amplifies the beauty of food, the people who grow it and eat it and the experience of eating as a communal act. Cookbooks are a glimpse into a specific time and place and ultimately can signal our intentions for ourselves.

While serving both a cultural and emotional need, cookbooks can also be very lucrative. According to BookNet Canada statistics, 1.5 million cookbooks were sold in Canada in 2020 amounting to an estimated $54 million in sales revenue. For chefs who own restaurants, a cookbook can be like a business card, building credibility and recognizing the work that's been put into the restaurant. A successful cookbook can expand a chef's reputation—and restaurant—to a national market.

The COVID inspired (yet lasting) resto-retail trend saw restaurants selling groceries, grab-and-go meals, pantry kits and other retail products, selling cookbooks and other resto-brand merchandise is another way of driving revenue and is a great addition to mercantile-style establishments and restaurant retail offerings. What better way for a customer to continue the in-dining experience than having a keepsake to take home with them, that they can refer to again and again and relive that unique moment.

Regardless of why or how a cookbook comes to be, they all tell a story. Whether it's the story of the pandemic, the story of a chef and their restaurant, or the story of a culture and its people and traditions, cookbooks will always engage and delight their audience. There is something meaningful about cookbooks as carefully-selected, useful and constant reminders of dishes, places, people and experiences that only grow in value through repeated use.

2022 TASTE CANADA AWARD WINNERS

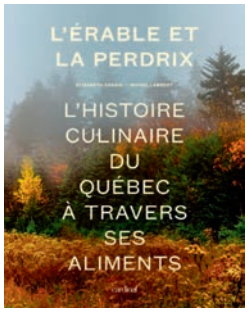
Culinary Narratives

Best food or beverage-related narrative written by a Canadian author (or authors) that is not primarily a recipe book.



GOLD (English-Language Book)

Bread & Water: Essays
by dee Hobsbawn-Smith
University of Regina Press, Regina



GOLD (French-Language Book)

L'érable et la perdrix
(L'histoire culinaire du Québec
à travers ses aliments)
par Elisabeth Cardin et Michel Lambert
Les Éditions Cardinal, Montréal

SILVER (English-Language Book): Food to Grow On: The Ultimate Guide to Childhood Nutrition from Pregnancy to Packed Lunches by Sarah Remmer and Cara Rosenbloom, Appetite by Random House, Vancouver

SILVER (French-Language Book): Tout sur les gins du Québec par Patrice Plante, Les Éditions La Presse, Anjou

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General Cookbooks

Best cookbook, written by a Canadian author (or authors), which covers a general range of topics, offering a variety of options to the Canadian cook.



GOLD (English-Language Book)

Well Seasoned: A Year's Worth of Delicious Recipes
by Mary Berg
Appetite by Random House,
Vancouver



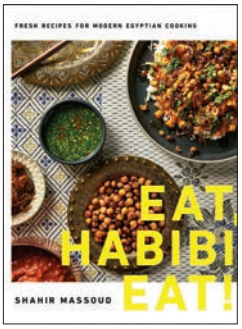
GOLD (French-Language Book)

K pour Katrine : le livre de recettes
par Katrine Paradis et
Margaux Verdier
KO Éditions, Montréal

SILVER (English-Language Book): Fast Easy Cheap Vegan by Sam Turnbull, Appetite by Random House, Vancouver

Regional/Cultural Cookbooks

Best cookbook written by a Canadian author (or authors), which best exemplifies the cooking of a specific terroir or region in Canada, or, the cooking of a specific ethnic group (in terms of race, nationality, or religious heritage) in Canada or around the world.



GOLD (English-Language Book)

Eat, Habibi, Eat! Fresh Recipes for Modern Egyptian Cooking
by Shahir Massoud
Appetite by Random House, Vancouver



GOLD (French-Language Book)

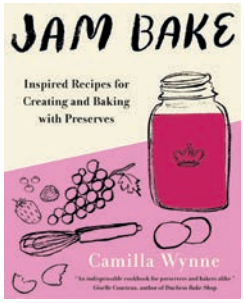
Les filles fattoush - La cuisine syrienne, une cuisine de cœur
par Adelle Tarzibachi
KO Éditions, Montréal

SILVER (English-Language Book):Macedonia: The Cookbook:Recipes and Stories from the Balkans by Katarina Nitsou, Interlink Books (Thomas Allen & Son), Markham

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Single-Subject Cookbooks

Best cookbook written by a Canadian author (or authors), which features a single topic in the culinary world.



GOLD (English-Language Book)

Jam Bake: Inspired Recipes for Creating and Baking with Preserves
by Camilla Wynne
Appetite by Random House, Vancouver



GOLD (French-Language Book)

En feu!
par Manon Lapierre
Les Éditions Cardinal, Montréal

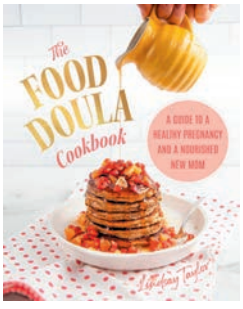
SILVER (English-Language Book): The Zero-Waste Chef: Plant-Forward Recipes and Tips for a Sustainable Kitchen and Planet by Anne-Marie Bonneau, Penguin Canada, Toronto

SILVER (French-Language Book): Tout sur les gins du Québec par Patrice Plante, Les Éditions La Presse, Anjou

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Health or Special Diet Cookbooks

Best cookbook, written by a Canadian author (or authors), which features content and recipes related to specific nutritional or health needs or lifestyle choices.



GOLD (English-Language Book)

The Food Doula Cookbook: A Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy and a Nourished New Mom
by Lindsay Taylor
Plumleaf Press, Oakville



GOLD (French-Language Book)

Recettes véganes pour gens actifs
par Xavier Desharnais et Nicolas Leduc-Savard
KO Éditions, Montréal

SILVER (French-Language Book):Bien manger, c'est tout simple ! par Marie-Ève Caplette, Saint-Jean Éditeur, Laval

Publishing *for* Restaurants



The age of self-publishing is here. Restaurants can boost margins and build brand loyalty with by engaging the senses with cookbooks.



Well-worn, dog-eared with pages bookmarked with flour, butter and sauces, most kitchens have beloved cookbooks that have become part of the family. These recipes fill bellies and create memories of family dinners, parties and backyard barbeques with friends that last long after the day is done. Cookbooks are more than just books, they're important cultural artifacts. What was popular in the 1970s is quite different than in the 1990s—how people hosted dinner parties, what they packed in their children's school lunches, or even the amount of time available to make dinner. Far-reaching societal changes are serialized over decades in the pages of cookbooks. We see food habits change and learn about how different people and cultures procure and prepare food through the way recipes are written. Cookbooks can serve as a way for people to understand different terroir, traditions, periods in time and styles of cooking, but they also provide a way for people to relive the moments and places that have shaped their lives. And, many of those moments happen in restaurants.

Cookbooks are a way for restaurants to create a lasting mnemonic link between their dining experience and the dining tables of their customers. They are a way to share not only the food they serve, but their culinary and social philosophy and the story of the people behind the plate. This is an established idea that can be repositioned for the next chapter in resto marketing, retail and food tourism facilitated by the rise of affordable self-publishing options.

There have been many memorable and sought-after cookbooks published by Canadian restaurants, including Maenam (Vancouver, BC), Wickaninnish Inn (Tofino,BC), Araxi (Whistler, BC), Duchess Bake Shop (Edmonton, AB), Atelier (Ottawa,ON), Joe Beef (Montreal,QC), The Inn at Bay Fortune (Fortune, PEI), to name but a few. What's new in the industry is the approach to these books and the restaurant formats now taking advantage of the opportunity to plant their culinary and experiential brand flag.

In June 2022, Earls restaurant which opened its first restaurant on Calgary Trail in 1982, released an updated version of its popular Earls The Cookbook in celebration of its fortieth anniversary. Inside you meet the Earls family, get introduced to the test kitchen and some of the restaurant chain's most popular recipes.

Langdon Hall in Cambridge, Ontario released Langdon Hall A Cookbook in April 2022 featuring seasonally inspired recipes with notes on techniques, wine pairings and stories about ingredients, cooking, farmers and purveyors from Chef Jason Bangerter. Beautifully shot on location, you can order the cookbook directly from Langdon Hall's website. The award-winning restaurant The Acorn in Vancouver, released Acorn Vegetables Re-imagined is a seasonally organized cookbook that celebrates plant-based cooking with a focus on minimizing waste and maximizing the potential of each plant.

A smaller compendium of favourite recipes simply produced but containing some of your customers' favourite recipes may be a great way to mark a moment in time of your

> "Restaurants that build a bonded community around their venue, menu and experience will be more successful, and cookbooks are a great platform to invite people into the tent.
>
> ~ Ciabh McEvenue
> Co-owner and Creative Director
> Arable Brand



restaurant. A cult favourite, the Hominy Grill Recipe Book contains 20 of the most requested recipes from the restaurant that closed in 2019 after 24 years in business. Their online shop remains open for sales of their cookbook, coffee mug, grits and jam.

While most restaurants may not be in a position to mass publish a cookbook, there are equally effective ways to self-publish your own cookbook to share with your customers. Smaller, local print houses can take on the job of affordable printing and binding your masterpiece. Many offer small-run, high quality options. There are also templates for cookbooks available online through photobook and self-publishing sites, some of which have print-on-demand services.

Ciabh McEvenue, co-owner and creative director at Arable Brand, a creative design and strategy agency focused on food brands, notes a widening opportunity for restaurants to create cookbooks to build brand engagement and loyalty. "While it's true that many of the great restaurant cookbooks have come from fine dining and gastro/culinary tourism, demand for simple comfort food recipes and even fast-food recipes is rising. Fast-food copycat recipes are all over TikTok because the familiar flavours provide comfort. Many of these recipes use lower-cost, pantry-friendly ingredients and are easier to make, which is very much on point for consumers right now. As food prices skyrocket, people will seek to satisfy their desire for experiences within their budget. Experimenting with restaurant recipes at home satisfies some of the craving for experience while reinforcing a consumer's connection with the restaurant brand. It doesn't take away from return visits though, because you can bet that making Anthony Rose's roast cauliflower at home will never replace the sensory immersion of dining out at Fat Pasha."

McEvenue points out another advantage: fun. She suggests that friendly, approachable restaurant brands have a unique opportunity to "break" the common narrative conceits and create a cookbook that's as casual, as quirky, as personal or as unpretentious as the restaurant experience. "Restaurants that build a bonded community around their venue, menu and experience will be more successful, and cookbooks are a great platform to invite people into the tent. They'll buy the book for the recipes, but the narrative in between is where restaurants can really connect and grow affiliation and loyalty. Adding memorable, authentic stories of the people behind the food and experience gives customers a broader opportunity to relate to the concept and philosophy of a restaurant as a human-led, cultural institution worth belonging to and engaging with. Ideally very often."

Thinking of publishing a cookbook to promote your restaurant? Before you get started, here are a few practical considerations.

WHAT KIND OF RESTAURANTS SHOULD PUBLISH A COOKBOOK?

Any restaurant format can benefit from publishing a cookbook, but should have an established, loyal customer base, a food-based reputation, and a clear understanding of its brand and position within the community it serves.

WHAT STATE ARE YOUR RECIPES IN?

Does your current menu feature items with a "secret ingredient" known only to a few? If you're considering your repertoire of recipes, are they all written down with clear, step-by-step instructions geared toward a novice home cook, or completely the opposite? Writing a cookbook for home use might be a great way to get down on paper the precise way a dish should be prepared and cooked, scaled for smaller servings. Make a list of all the recipes you would include in your cookbook, with ingredient lists, precise measurements, and clear instructions on preparation, cooking and serving. Remember, the person cooking from your cookbook won't have the ability to ask questions, and likely isn't a trained chef—everything needs to be covered in your recipe.

WHAT ELSE CAN THIS RECIPE DO?

Does this recipe freeze well? How should leftovers be stored and for how long? Are there any tips or tricks that might save time or add to the experience or knowledge of the cook? Are there parts of the recipe that can be prepped beforehand and used in more than one recipe? Is there a fun way to change up leftovers? Consider the home cook and what would appeal to them.

HOW CAN YOU BRING YOUR RESTAURANT TO LIFE IN SOMEONE ELSE'S KITCHEN?

Cookbooks are a way to tell stories and to build connections with your readers. Weave in a story about an occasion to serve a specific recipe. Add in anecdotes about how and on what occasion a dish or dessert is served at the restaurant. Explain why it's on your menu/why it's still on the menu/why it was retired from the menu and explain why it should be on regular rotation in your readers' kitchens.

DO I SHARE EVERYTHING?

Save your best recipes for your restaurant's kitchen…or not. It really comes down to confidence in the likelihood that home chefs will not be able to replace a visit to your restaurant by making your food at home. If the most popular menu item takes days to prepare, sharing the recipe may make the reader appreciate the amount of work and skill it takes to bring their favourite dish to the table. You also may want to share some cocktail favourites or wines that you recommend by sharing some stories about patrons who order the same pairings or if you keep something on a secret menu for long-time patrons or special guests. Including complementary wine recommendations or cocktail recipes could also offset the cost of cookbook production by opening the door to paid partnerships and cross-promotion.

SHOULD I TEST MY RECIPES?

Yes. Make sure they're written in a way that explains each step, in quantities for 4-6 people. Easy recipe testers might be employees in your restaurant or some of your best customers. Involve people in the process and get them excited about what they'll see.

DO I NEED TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER/ COPYWRITER/GRAPHIC DESIGNER?

It depends. What do you envision for your cookbook and how does it fit with your restaurant. Would a fun, low-cost, old-school cookbook like a text-only collection of family recipes work for your restaurant brand? Or is a beautifully styled cookbook with photos with plated food more suitable? Keep in mind some of the most beloved recipes are on cue cards, handwritten and handed down from generation to generation. You may also have employees on your team who are skilled at photography, copywriting or graphic design. Also if you choose to use a pre-made template, you can save money on design and focus on good photography and writing.

HOW WILL I SELL MY COOKBOOK?

If you have space, you can merchandise your cookbook in a small area of your restaurant. You may also want to consider a line of branded merchandise. Is there a special spice blend or dip that your customers enjoy that's used in the cookbook? Is there a way to refer to your spice blend in your cookbook? Do you have a cool mug that may make a great way to serve a dessert? Style and photograph the dessert in the mug and sell the mugs alongside the cookbook. Cross-promotion and retail merchandise can increase margins and show guests that a restaurant is established and worthy of appreciation.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO CONSIDER?

A cookbook should represent your restaurant in every respect. Bring the same style, colour palette and sensibility to your design. Is there a local farm or butcher that you like to support? Add a credit to validate and share your procurement practices. Add any details and/or certifications related to values like sustainability, social justice or advocacy. These efforts are important and if they're core to your business, they should be shared and promoted. Use your cookbook to further community involvement or educate on issues you care about and the restaurant supports.

A labour of love, cookbooks are the perfect immersive scrapbook and promotional tool for restaurants. When they're created with an end-to-end understanding of your food, culture and purpose and written for the people you'd most love to have in for dinner, they can create an enduring connection and keep the conversation going in between visits.

groupex CANADA
GIVING INDEPENDENTS THE BUYING POWER OF CHAINS!

THE BURGER SHACK

Operator:
Jason Martens
Groupex member since: 2020
La Crête, Alberta

the burger shack

If you ever have a chance to visit the small, tight-knit community of La Crête in northern Alberta, make it a priority to try the onion ring burger at The Burger Shack.

The family-owned town local is operated by Jason Martens and features a menu that revolves around, you guessed it, incredible, homemade burgers. Always bustling with regulars from the town, The Burger Shack is busiest on weekends when people from the surrounding area come to town to shop and the forestry workers come home. Guests rave about their recipes, their portions, their service and their gravy. The most popular burgers are the bacon cheeseburger, the Canadian and the onion ring burger with house sauce, which happens to be Martens' personal favourite. "Most of our burgers were developed by our head cook—she likes to experiment," he says. "In the last couple of years, we've moved towards dine-in and renovated our whole restaurant. We put in new lights, it's way dimmer in there with better atmosphere. We added more pastas and have steak and rib night. Our customers love it."

Recalling the restaurant's humble beginning in Fort Vermilion (about 20 minutes away), Martens laughs. "My sister had a small bakery there, and we saw a small, drive-through place across the road. There was no dine-in. It was small—literally a shack. That's why it was called The Burger Shack,











I guess. The owners were retiring and we decided to purchase it and kept the name." Eventually, they sold the original location and moved the business to La Crête opening a larger, 3,500 square foot restaurant with dine-in to see them through the slower winter months.

Martens admits that, while the restaurant did have its share of shut-downs during the pandemic, it has not experienced the last few years with the same intensity as restaurants in southern, high-density areas. "We shut down a couple times here and there, but we mostly stayed open with reduced seating. But a lot of the COVID stuff just didn't really hit us. We're kind of isolated—we're seven hours north of Edmonton."

What has affected The Burger Shack is inflation. Restaurants located far from major food distribution centres already pay more for their ingredients due to additional transportation costs, and universal price increases have further strained margins. "You just don't know what to do. You can't just always raise the prices because customers are going to complain, but they all go to the grocery store, and they see the same thing there. So, they kind of know."

A Groupex member for two years, Martens heard about the opportunity to buy through Groupex from his Pepsico rep. "I was kind of skeptical," he admits. "I sent an email and Bonnie, our Groupex rep called me and basically told me to let her take care of it. She did everything for me."

Martens still orders directly from his suppliers, but because he's a member, he is entitled to rebates that reflect the Groupex account rate. Every month he receives a cheque for the difference. "We didn't really have to change anything. Bonnie signed us up for everything that we wanted, and then we basically just went on ordering as we always do. You just get a cheque at the end of the month and, if you have any questions, you can always email or call her and she's always really helpful. We get a statement at the end of the month that shows the rebate amount for each item we ordered."

"I mean, you won't get rich off it," he laughs. "But every bit helps right now."

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GIVING INDEPENDENTS THE BUYING POWER OF CHAINS!

Established in 1984 by a small group of independent restaurants, today, Groupex is the largest foodservice account in Canada with some of the leading branded suppliers such as Pepsico, Diversey, Canada Bread and Gordon Food Service. Groupex uses the buying power of its national membership base to negotiate savings on essential restaurant supplies and services. Members save thousands of dollars on beverages, food, operational and financial programs.

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Putting People and the Planet on Par with Profit:

In Conversation with **Court Desautels**, CEO of Neighbourhood Group of Companies

BY CHRIS SZEGO



The Neighbourhood Group of Companies (NGC) was started by Bob Desautels in 1990 with environmental and community responsibility built into the fabric of the business. Responsibly harvested ingredients and a strong commitment to minimizing their carbon footprint were always part of the vision because Bob Desautels believed that a focus on sustainability made for good business policy. Current CEO Court Desautels has built on that foundation, expanding the business and its definition of sustainability to include people as well as the planet.

"I'm an S.O.B.," says Court, "Son of Bob." After a stint at Sleeman Breweries, Court, the young Desautels joined the company in 2006, taking over management of the Wooly Pub, NGC's first property. He opened Borealis Grille & Bar in Guelph in 2008 and a second location in Kitchener in 2011. In 2015 Desautels opened Miijidaa in Guelph, and took over as CEO in 2016. The Park Eatery, NGC's most recent restaurant, opened in Guelph in 2019. Headquartered in Guelph, NGC currently operates five restaurants.

Desautels' vision for NGC is to deliver superior service with a sense of social responsibility coupled with unwavering dedication to environmental sustainability. And it all starts with employees. "Our industry is built on the backs of workers," he says. "We expect them to cater to guests, to make sure every customer is happy. Historically, we haven't paid them well, and have worked them long, hard hours. We take a reverse approach: if our people are happy, our guests will be happy."

If the choice is between "carrot" and "whip," Desautels is determined to choose the carrot all the way. NGC rolled out a health benefits program for employees in 2014, which included both salaried and hourly employees. "At first, our investors were hesitant because of the cost," he admits. But rolling out the program restaurant by restaurant showed the success of the experiment The first restaurant to deliver the health benefits program showed immediate results. "It had the lowest employee turnover and the highest increase in sales," he notes. "When you're able to keep your employees longer, they get better at their jobs. When employees are more engaged in their work, they have better interactions with guests, which results in increased sales."

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Encouraged by that success, NGC decided to it keep going, introducing a health and wellness program in 2018. "The idea was to encompass habits and resources, to meet non-benefit needs employees might have. For instance, since many of our hourly employees are students on tight schedules, we made sure to serve healthy snacks and to make nutritious food available so they could attend classes without skipping meals," he shares. They even ran a bus pass program for employees, a twofold effort that provided employee assistance while promoting environmental responsibility.

Over time, the company has introduced other programs and incentives. NGC's education fund for both salaried and hourly employees provides access to annual amounts to help them pursue professional development. Another strikingly original plan was to introduce a micro-loan program to help employees escape the trap of predatory lenders. "Some of our employees were losing 30 per cent of their pay so they could quickly access cash to pay for rent or food," says Desautels. "We instituted micro-loans which they could pay back over many pay periods."

The pandemic hit NGC as hard as every other part of the food and hospitality sector. Before any government relief programs were announced, Desautels and his team went to work, creating a relief fund for the 156 employees who suddenly found themselves without incomes. "We sold gift cards to raise money," he recalls. "We were hoping to raise $10,000 to help offset the financial impact on our most vulnerable employees. Instead, our guests helped us raise $60,000." Then they had to come up with a non-biased application process to distribute the funds. A group of 12 people, including Desautels, investors, managers and hourly employees, formed a committee to examine all the applications and allocate the funds. "During that period, we continued health benefits for everyone, even if they were laid off."

> "Court began the process of striving for B Corp certification in 2011. "There are a lot of steps to take, and goals to meet. Success is measured by people, not profits. And the focus is stakeholders, not shareholders."

Communication was key. They held bi-weekly town halls to keep in touch, and their outreach didn't stop there. "We looked at all the specialties our employees had to offer," he says. "Hospitality workers are hardworking, very productive and they like to help people. One staff member was also a yoga instructor—we hired her to give online yoga sessions to employees. We also hired a storyteller to read stories to children while they were at home all day, so parents could have a little break." Originally intended solely for staff, these online offerings were eventually made available to guests as well. "It worked both as entertainment and as a way to promote our employees' side-hustles."

Like so many other foodservice operators, NGC was left with food on hand in the wake of the shutdowns. "We donated food to staff, then to local organizations and shelters. We processed the ingredients into soups, stews, curries and then worked with food organizations to help plan and distribute meals. Our staff made that possible. Because they had been helped and supported by us, our employees had time and resources to help other people."

Generosity can be circular in nature, and a business can be a force for good. NGC is a certified B Corp company, part of a growing movement that sees responsible business as a force for societal and environment change and prioritizes accountability, performance, and transparency. "We're audited on our environmental and social governance initiatives, as well as our employment policies and guest services," says Desautels. "'People, planet, profit' has always been our model, even when we were just a craft beer bar. Back then, we raised money for environmental action in our area. Over time, we've developed our social aspect—how we support our people as well as our community."

Court began the process of striving for B Corp certification in 2011. "There are a lot of steps to take, and goals to meet. Success is measured by people, not profits. And the focus is stakeholders, not shareholders." Restaurant groups are not particularly well represented in the B Corp fold: NGC is one of the largest in Canada. Court sees the need for participation now more than ever. "A lot of communities are

suffering. If we can keep people from slipping into volatile situations, we have an obligation to help."

Help starts with a shift in perspective. In contrast to the old-school idea that business and personal lives should be kept separate, Desautels encourages exactly the opposite approach. "Get involved in your employees' lives. That's how you can find out what services they need, and how you can tailor what you offer them. Think about it in terms of food: you don't offer your customers just one way to have a burger—you have a variety of options. So, you can't take a one-plan-fits-all approach to employee programs either."

> "Ultimately, we want to create good credit for our employees. The restaurant industry has long been a source of first jobs, for young people and for new Canadians—people with no credit history. Credit is a powerful tool: how can we facilitate that? We're not there yet, but we're working on it."

Currently Desautels is exploring ideas for future projects and creating a formal employee retention plan. Helping employees build financial resilience is a major priority. "We're working on ways to offer up-front bonuses, to remove financial stressors right from the start." NGC has also designed programs to help employees save and invest. "Ultimately, we want to create good credit for our employees. The restaurant industry has long been a source of first jobs, for young people and for new Canadians—people with no credit history. Credit is a powerful tool. How can we facilitate that? We're not there yet, but we're working on it."

Although NGC wasn't able to keep all their employees through the pandemic, enough staff stayed on that when restricted capacity reopening was possible, they were fully staffed. "Word of mouth is the strongest form of advertising. That's true for employees as well," says Desautels. "People who worked for us spread the word. And, as things normalized, we were people's first choice when they returned to the industry. We're back up to 150 employees now, right where we were before the pandemic."

The massive sector-wide staff shortage puts employees in control, and a growing number of industry professionals feel that's how it should be. "If you were not a good employer before the pandemic, you're probably in dire straits now," Desautels speculates. "Even if you were a good employer, you have to continue to evolve. Be creative, find out what matters most to your team. Tailor your programs and offerings down to the individual level. It's not charity. It's good business."

Court acknowledges that it feels counterintuitive. "People think 'it will cost too much.' But what will it cost you when your employees leave? We figure that, at the entry level, it costs three to five thousand dollars to lose an employee. It's not the training, it's the time it takes to get people up to speed. But we've seen it right there in our restaurants, the lowest turnover rate correlates directly to lower costs, better sales and higher profitability. We're finally starting to see the narrative change."

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP
BY NEIGHBOURS · FOR NEIGHBOURS

miijidaa café + bistro · The Wooly Pub · Borealis Grille & Bar Obsessively Local · Park Eatery

WHAT'S ON EVERY CANADIAN OPERATOR'S WISHLIST?



THE RETURN OF "CELEBRATION".

The holiday season is crucial to the bar and hospitality industry. That's nothing new, of course, but this year the stakes are undeniably higher. As we enter the holiday season and book office parties and custom events, experiences and packages, many operators are betting big on pent-up demand and insight-led ideas to add sparkle and revenue to their plans.

At Molson Coors, brand teams are supporting operators with a mix of tried-and-true and forward-thinking ideas and resources to help optimize bar revenue and enhance customer experience led by awareness of the high hopes and higher stakes for Canadian operators as we head into the new year. "This will truly be the first time that consumers can spend time with each other and connect without the same looming threat of COVID-19—last year, there was still a lot of hesitation, and you didn't' see big gatherings," says Sasha Romano Lopez, Sr. Marketing Manager at Heineken™. The holidays this year are going to feel more like "normal". We anticipate consumers will trade up for these corporate parties or at home holiday get-togethers and be willing to dig deeper into their pockets. In 2023, consumers will be continuing to look for those memorable, elevated experiences. They may not be going out a lot, but when they are going out, they are doing it well."

This year, Molson Coors expects customers to seek out familiar flavours and brands while pursuing enriched experiences in the on-premise. "Heineken has always been synonymous with the holidays," Sasha shares. "We have still been able to bring to life some amazing holiday activations despite COVID-19, whether it be our beautiful displays and programming in stores, with our OP partners, or in the heart of the city at YDS with our "Cheers to Your Holiday Tradition" activation. This year, we are going back to our roots of "owning the holidays", where you can expect to see the brand to come to life even bigger and better

through our customers at retail, and in the on premise, and through our new national media campaign "The Closer", which encourages consumers to #workresponsibly, shutting down the work grind and reconnecting with friends, family and co-workers over a Heineken or Heineken 0.0."

Molson Coors is a sector leader in beverage innovation tied to holistic market insights and the consumption trends and habits of emerging demographics, acknowledging that 19-24 year-olds are the fastest-growing consumer base for low-alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks. Paired with the universal trend toward premiumization in both consumable and experiential restaurant offerings, Molson Coors is supporting on-premise partners with both new, market-driven products like Heineken 0.0 and thoughtful activations and promotions that keep customers on site and engaged with restaurant partners.

Self-taught and globally-awarded mixologist Patrice Plante works with Molson Coors on beverage ideation, and he confirms the trend toward low and no-alcohol options within the cocktail world. "I think the non-alcoholic trend will soar again, and again and again until it is fully integrated within our restaurant and social encounter culture. With non-alcoholic drinks becoming more complex and interesting—even for people that still love alcohol—it would be a wise move for Canadian bars to be at the forefront of this trend and develop entire menus of low/no alc options."

Patrice's bar craft is creative, intelligent, and story-driven. In spite of winning regional and national mixology competition titles including Quebec's Bartender of the Year (Lauriers de la gastronomie) in 2018 and Best Cocktail Book in the World (International Gourmand Awards), he is fuelled by passion, not pretention. "I am passionate about democratizing the cocktail and mocktail making at home," he says. Over the years Patrice has conquered his naturally shy personality, authoring five popular mixology books (all best sellers in Quebec) and starting several entrepreneurial ventures and, now 41, Patrice is father to three young "princesses" and lives on the island of Orleans in Quebec City. "In 2015, I founded Monsieur Cocktail, a company specializing in a never-before-seen line of craft syrup that simplifies the art of making pro and delicious drinks at home. And this year, I launched NOA, a new line of non-alcoholic spirits and liqueurs that uses juices and maple syrup in order to deliver the same powerful taste as their alcoholic counterpart to promote a more healthy and balanced lifestyle."

"The other trend I see coming is beer cocktails," Patrice shares. "A lot have been made in the past, but with mixology more popular than ever, I think a new category of drinks is on the horizon—the mix of light beer with bitter aperitivo and citrus, to complement the complexity of the cereals and transform this into an Apero experience where the alcohol percentage is very low and the taste is familiar, refreshing and bitter."

Patrice's bar craft is creative, intelligent, and story-driven.

Always looking at new and interesting ways to enhance a moment or tell a story through ingredient selection, process and experience, Patrice is looking forward to the holidays and new year with a mindfulness and clarity of purpose, doubling down on the importance of hospitality and creating powerful moments. "I mean, this is the first time in two years the majority of us will be able to finally reunite with friends and family. Yes, 2023 will be a tough year for sure, but this holiday season is a time to remember that the magic created by a cocktail or a night celebrating in a restaurant or a bar, will never, ever change—this unique ability to connect, to share a moment with people we love."





Celebrate with Lower-Cost Cocktails

It's no secret that 2023 will bring fresh challenges. To help support bottom-line realities as we head into the new year, Patrice Plante of Monsieur Cocktail has partnered with Molson Coors to offer three lower-cost cocktail recipes to create magic and build margins in bars across Canada.



Coors Delight

> 1 can of Coors Light beer
> 1 oz of bitter aperitivo (like Campari)
> 0.5 oz of strawberry syrup
> Lime wedge (to garnish)

1. Simply add the aperitivo and the syrup to your cold beer for a bitter and fruity perfect appetizer.
2. Garnish with a lime wedge.



Sunny Afternoon in Milan

> 6 oz of Vizzy passionfruit or raspberry lemonade
> 1.5 oz of non-alcoholic Amaretto NOA
> 0.75 oz of pure cranberry juice
> Lemon wheel (to garnish)

1. In a glass filled with ice, add the amaretto and the cranberry juice and stir until your fingers are cold.
2. Add the Vizzy.
3. Garnish with a lemon wheel and olive.



Tête de mule

> 6 oz of Vizzy raspberry lemonade or Heineken 0.0
> 1 oz of Monsieur Cocktail's ginger syrup
> Mint (to garnish)

1. In a glass filled with ice, stir the syrup until fingers are cold.
2. Add the hard seltzer or beer.
3. Garnish with fresh mint.

THE MARKETPLACE

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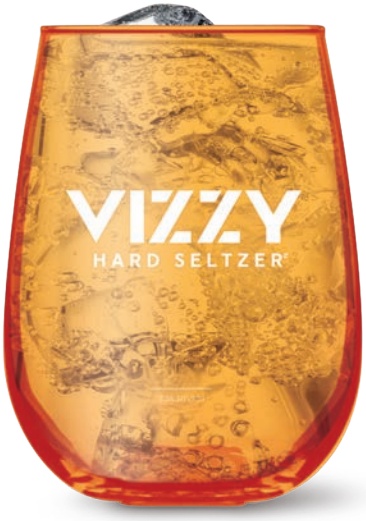
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